

**International Education & Engagement (IEE)**

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## Hosting an International Scholar

### I. Purpose of Exchange Visitor Program (EVP):

To increase mutual understanding between the people of the U.S. and the people of other countries by means of educational and cultural exchanges. International scholars are part of the EVP. To meet the goal of the EVP program, **ALL** international scholars' programs must include collaborative on-campus scholarly endeavors.

**The University of Wisconsin – La Crosse (UWL)** is authorized by the U.S. Department of State to sponsor J visas for Exchange Visitors be conducting collaborative academic research, teaching, lecturing, observing and/or consulting at UWL.

### EVP is not appropriate for individuals who will:

- Engage in any position that does not require the minimum of a Bachelor's degree;
- Pursue independent research projects;
- Be employed through UWL in tenure-track or tenured faculty appointments or long term positions;
- Pass through the formal recruitment and hiring process with UWL's HR Department;
- Pursue US Permanent Residency (green card)

### EVP Programs at UWL must include the following:

- Activities related to achieving scholar's EVP objective must require their regular presence on campus (excluding library access).
- Collaboration and/or cross-cultural exchanges between scholars and UWL faculty.
- faculty and campus community.

### EVP Scholar Categories:

1. **J-1 Professor** (3 week minimum - 5 year maximum) – primary purpose is teaching or lecturing at post-secondary accredited academic institution. Other activities include observing, consulting and conducting research.
2. **J-1 Research Scholar** (3 week minimum - 5 year maximum) - primary purpose is conducting research, observing, or consulting in connection with a research project may also teach or lecture.
3. **J-1 Short Term Scholar** (no minimum; 6 month maximum) – can be professors, research scholars, specialists, or persons with similar education or accomplishments coming to the U.S. on a short-term visit for the purpose of lecturing, observing, consulting, collaborating on special research projects, or training.

**Minimum Qualifications:** Potential Scholar must have earned a minimum of a bachelor's degree to be considered for participation in UWL's EVP and corresponding J visa sponsorship.

### II. Host Department Procedures:

Review information provided in this document in addition to International Scholar information located under the International scholars tab on IEE's website: <https://www.uwlax.edu/international-education/>

Contact Miranda Panzer, International Education & Engagement's (IEE) J-1 Scholar Coordinator, directly at [mpanzer@uwlax.edu](mailto:mpanzer@uwlax.edu) to arrange a meeting to receive and review necessary forms required of the Host

Department. Both the prospective scholar and the host department must complete forms and prepare documentation in order for the scholar to receive form DS-2019 (a legal form the scholar will need to apply for a J visa).

**Timeline:** Bringing an individual to campus to participate in UWL's EVP may take anywhere from three to six months, after the following Host Department procedures have been completed.

**Supervising Faculty Mentor (SFM):** Every international scholar requires a Host Department and a SFM. The chair of the host department should determine the potential scholar's SFM. There needs to be a clear academic match between the SFM's field of research/expertise and the academic focus of the scholar's EVP. SFM's must hold one of the following ranks or its equivalent in the academic host department: Professor, Associate Professor or Assistant Professor. SFM's commit to regular meetings with the scholar (minimum of once a week). Many SFM's engage in collaborative research and/or provide some type of training.

**Host Department Forms:** Submit forms directly to Miranda Panzer at mpanzer@uwlax.edu

**EVP's objective and activities:** Prior to initiating the process to bring a scholar to campus, the host department/SFM must obtain a clear understanding of the purpose of the scholar's proposed EVP and determine which activities (refer to activities listed under EVP Categories) the department can provide to achieve the program's objective.

**Scholar's program start/end dates:** The start date should reflect the day the scholar's EVP program/activities begin at UWL. All EVP program activities must conclude by the program end date.

#### **STEP ONE - Submit Host Department Request for DS-2019 Form**

- SFM completes and submits form
- IEE will review form and work with SFM if edits are necessary. SFM submits revised form.
- Once approved, IEE provides **Host Department Responsibilities Agreement**

#### **STEP TWO – Submission of Host Department Responsibilities Agreement Form and Draft Invitation Letter**

- Using information provided in **Host Department Request for DS-2019 Form**, SFM completes and signs **Host Department Responsibilities Agreement Form** and submits to department chair for signature. Department chair submits form to Dean of College for signature.
- Using information provided in forms mentioned above, department chair drafts an invitation letter inviting the potential scholar to campus.

Letter must be on department letterhead and include the following:

- Name of department which will host scholar
- Name and contact information of host department's SFM
- Scholar's EVP category
- Objective of scholar's EVP at UWL and specific types of activities host department will provide to scholar to achieve program's objective
- Specify collaborative activities scholar will engage in at UWL
- Terms of scholar's program at UWL including start/end dates, salary (if applicable)
- Host department's expectations of the scholar
- Identify any type of university support which will be provided to the scholar such as availability of office/lab space, access to equipment, computer access, clerical support, resources, and faculty collaboration available to the scholar

**FINAL STEP** – After reviewing documents, IEE will email department chair to request Invitation Letter be sent to the scholar.

At this point, IEE/IEE will contact prospective scholar directly to explain entire process (UWL's International Scholar application, issuance of form DS-2019, application for J visa, etc.) and provide application. IEE will work with prospective scholar to answer questions and provide assistance in collecting required documentation and completing the application. After receiving the prospective scholar's application and required documentation, it generally takes approximately three weeks to review the application and determine if the prospective scholar is eligible to be sponsored by UWL's EVP. This determination is provided to the scholar via email with the SFM and host department chair copied. If eligible, the scholar will receive information on how to receive their DS-2019 form. Accompanying the DS-2019 form will be a letter providing instructions on how to pay the I-901 SEVIS fee and how to prepare for the J visa interview at a U.S. embassy or consulate.

### **III. Services provided by IEE:**

- Provide Scholar Program Overview
- Develop and provide prospective scholars and Host Department with a variety of resources to assist in understanding of UWL's EVP
- Conduct English proficiency interviews
- Provide useful information on living in La Crosse
- Answer questions the scholar and/or host department may have regarding applications, forms, processes, etc.
- Prepare form DS-2019 and letter of invitation for visa interview
- Provide directions on how to pay the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) fee and schedule a visa appointment
- Provide scholar's dependent(s) with form DS-2019 necessary to obtain J-2 visa(s)
- Submit paperwork to HR requesting a miscellaneous UWL email and WINGS ID# necessary for scholar to pay health insurance and scholar fee on campus at the Cashier's office
- Assist scholar in obtaining a campus ID card that can be used at Murphy Library
- Assist scholars with enrolling in UWL's mandatory insurance policy and providing information on cost of insurance and coverage details
- Provide a mandatory immigration check-in within 20 days of scholar's program start date as listed under item #3 on form DS-2019. Topics discussed during orientation includes information on how to maintain J1 visa status; how to use health insurance; processes for obtaining travel signatures and employment authorization, and tour of places to eat on campus
- Validate scholar's program participation via the Department of Homeland Security's SEVIS database
- Provide immigration related advising for duration of scholar's program
- Provide advising and support to scholar on transitioning to life in the U.S. and cross-cultural concerns
- Provide a variety of cross cultural activities and opportunities for scholar to engage in cross cultural experiences and culture sharing throughout their program
- Provide information and resources on opening a bank account, if applicable
- Update scholar's SEVIS record as needed
- Explain and process extension of program requests
- Transfer scholar's EVP program to another SEVIS approved institution, if applicable
- Provide scholar and host department with J program updates and/or policy changes
- Provide immigration advising, including obtaining work authorization, to scholars' J2 dependents
- Provide basic tax information (no advising) that directly pertains international scholars and their dependents

## IV. Additional Information

**Mandatory health insurance:** The U.S. State Department requires all individuals on J visas to have and maintain enrollment in a health insurance plan that meets all requirements set by their office. For this reason, ALL scholars and their J2 dependents are required to enroll in UWL's International Scholar/Student Health Insurance policy for the duration of their program. This policy meets and/or exceeds all requirements set forth by the State Department. IEE provides insurance information to prospective scholars during the application process. Scholars submit documentation to IEE verifying understanding of this requirement. IEE provides the estimated cost of this insurance to scholars prior to their arrival in the U.S. Please note, **International Scholars and their dependents cannot use UWL's Student Health Center. They must go off campus for medical care.** Information on scholar's health insurance is located at:

<https://www.uwlax.edu/international-education/international-scholars/required-health-insurance/insurance/>

**Resources:** During the application process, IEE provides prospective scholars with the following resources:

- **EVP Welcome Brochure** – developed by the U.S. Department of State, this brochure explains the purpose of the EVP and introduces some of the major requirements of participating in the program.
- **Living in La Crosse Guide** – contains information on local transportation, shopping, medical resources, emergency information, recreation and information on area pK-12 schools for scholars with children.
- **Housing Guide** – provides links to sites listing available housing in the area, includes temporary housing information, and provides specific information on leases and the rights and responsibilities of renters.
- **Opportunities to improve English and/or engage with the local community** – International scholars are invited to sign up for IEE's Global Buddy Program and can submit an application to be matched up with a local Friendship Family (this is not a housing option).

Resources are located on IEE's website at <https://www.uwlax.edu/international-education/international-scholars/resources/>

**Verification of English proficiency:** The U.S. Department of State requires program sponsors to conduct documented interviews in English to confirm prospective scholars possess sufficient English proficiency to engage in J program activities and navigate daily life without undue difficulty. IEE staff, including English as a Second Language (ESL) faculty, conduct such interviews via skype or We Chat. In some instances, scholars may be required to enroll in ESL/daily English courses during their UWL program. This information is provided to scholars in advance of issuing DS-2019 forms.