Academic Colleagues,

I hope you enjoyed your summer! It is the time of year to conduct a review of the expiration dates for your international faculty and scholars’ immigration statuses, specifically F-1 OPT, J-1, H-1B, TN, E-3 and O-1 visas. Please review the status of your international employees with their respective supervisors and determine whether or not an extension will be required. Below are the timelines we are currently working with, delineated by immigration status:

- **H-1B extensions**: H-1Bs expiring by March 2023 can be filed at this time
- **J-1 extensions**: J-1s expiring by December 2022 can be filed at this time
- **F-1 OPT Change of Status to H-1B**: F-1 OPTs expiring March 2023 can be filed at this time
- **Review EAD card expiration dates to determine if an extension or change of status is necessary.**

At the time of this message, plan for a minimum of four months processing time at USCIS.

**U.S. Consulates/Embassies - Visa Issuance**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, US consulates and embassies are backlogged with visa applications. It may take 30 to 60 days, if not longer, to schedule an appointment. We advise faculty to identify an alternate embassy with shorter wait times.

The Department of State continues to offer waivers of the interview requirement for certain nonimmigrant visas. The policy grants foreign nationals, when eligible, a waiver of the visa interview. The policy, issued on December 23, 2021, is effective through 2022 and permits select H-1B, O-1 and J-1 applicants with a previously approved visa to request a waiver of the visa interview. Visa applicants must apply for a visa in their country of nationality or residence. The foreign national will be required to complete the DS-160 visa application and pay the visa fee. We advise that they follow up with the U.S. embassy to determine their eligibility for the waiver.

We continue to monitor U.S. government entry restrictions and the operations of U.S. embassies and consulates with regard to visa issuance. For more details, please visit the Department of State - Bureau of Consular Affairs’s website for visa wait times.

**COVID-19 Travel Requirements for entry to the U.S.**

The U.S. government requires all nonimmigrants seeking to enter the U.S. be fully vaccinated against COVID-19. Limited exceptions apply.

**J-1 Exchange Visitor Program**

As we prepare for the arrival of new J-1 scholars for the Fall 2022 semester, we remind you that J-1 activities must be partially or fully performed on campus at the University of Maryland. In accordance
with Department of State regulations, we must determine that each individual scholar to whom we are issuing new J-1 visa documents will perform a majority of their research activities in-person at the site of activity. The latest Department of State guidance decrees that telework activities are limited to 1-2 days per week. This guidance is in place through June of 2023.

J-1 Processing Tips:

- **Initial J-1 DS-2019s:** Initial requests for a J-1 DS-2019 must be submitted to ISSS 4 months before the start date. This processing time allows time for visa applications, J-1 travel time, departmental request processing, and ISSS processing. ISSS begins its processing after the Provost’s Office approves the PHR appointment. Please plan to begin J-1 visitors with this 4-month lead time as this allows the employee sufficient time to apply for a US visa, undergo background checks (4 - 6 weeks), handle their personal matters and travel to the US to find housing and settle-in before starting their position. ISSS estimates a timeline of 3 weeks for DS-2019 processing. Requests are processed in the order that they are received.

- **Extensions/Transfers:** Please submit J-1 Extension and Transfer requests 3 months before the DS-2019/appointment end date. This will allow sufficient time to review and approve the request, which may require collecting additional information prior to issuing the DS-2019. The J-1 participant may need to renew security clearances and driver’s licenses. Early completion of the extension request can facilitate the continuity of the research project.

- **PHR Start Dates:** When possible, we ask that paid J-1 exchange visitors receive PHR start dates on the first of the month in order to simplify the health insurance process for the exchange visitor. COVID-19 has increased the importance of continuous insurance coverage. When the J-1 participant does not have coverage at the start of their position, they must find alternative insurance until they can be added to the State of Maryland’s insurance plan. This creates a barrier to a smooth transition at UMD. Careful planning before the beginning of the program is important.

- **PHR Appointment:** J-1 DS-2019 requests begin at the department level with the release of an appointment in PHR. The release of the appointment will trigger a data feed overnight from PHR to iTerp. The following day, you will be able to search for the employee using the UID and date of birth and begin processing in iTerp. Details on this process can be found on the ISSS website here. Please note that ISSS may not issue a DS-2019 until the appointment has been approved by Academic Affairs.

- **New English Proficiency:** ISSS is now accepting Duolingo, an American language company that provides language certification. The minimum score to meet UMD English proficiency requirements is 75.

- **New J-1 Funding Guide Website:** ISSS has published a new website that contains information about funding of J-1 programs. This webpage details both the funding requirements for J-1 programs and what funding types are acceptable per the position type.

- **Use of Faculty Titles:** The J-1 status is limited to temporary position titles, such as postdoctoral associate, faculty assistant, and visiting scientists and visiting professors. J-1 regulations prohibit the use of the visa for tenure-track/tenured/permanent positions.

- **J-1 Online Check-in:** Upon arrival into the U.S., all J-1 scholars will check-in online through iTerp. Login instructions for iTerp are posted on the ISSS website. In some cases, the scholar may require assistance with scanning documents for upload into iTerp.

- **J-1 Orientation:** During the fall semester, ISSS will continue to host J-1 orientation virtually every other Thursday, 10:00 am - 12:00 pm.
• J-1 Pre-Arrival Orientation: Every month, ISSS offers a Pre-Arrival Orientation session to all incoming J-1 scholars and faculty. This orientation sets expectations for the scholars and provides them with resources prior to their arrival in the U.S. Please encourage your incoming scholars to attend.

H-1B Employment Visa Program

We are currently experiencing lengthy processing times of 5 months at USCIS for the adjudication of H-1B applications. It is critical that departments submit requests in iTerp for initial and extension petitions with a minimum of a 5 to 6-month lead time.

• ISSS is regularly receiving “urgent” requests from around campus, some with less than 3 months of time remaining in the employee’s current immigration status. This practice jeopardizes the employee’s ability to continue their employment, remain in the US., and renew their driver’s license.
• Requests for initial and extension H-1B petitions filed with 3-months lead time for processing may necessitate the need for premium processing. For these last-minute submissions, USCIS charges a premium processing fee of an additional $2,500 to expedite each case.

Communicating with a Faculty/Scholar Advisor

• Chat online with ISSS for quick inquiries: M-F, 10:30am-12:30pm
• Our website contains most of the information you need to submit requests to ISSS
• Make an appointment with an ISSS advisor
• Dedicated phone line to better manage the volume of calls regarding international faculty/scholar issues. Ash Reynolds is your main point of contact for international faculty/scholar questions. Their direct line is 301-405-1617.

ISSS Communication

For easier reference, we have a designated site on our webpage where you can reference past ISSS communications on immigration updates.

We have created a Data Collection form and checklists for all visa types to assist with the initial steps of hiring an international faculty member. We hope you find this helpful, and we welcome your feedback.

If you have any questions, please contact me at cjl@umd.edu.

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ISSS