This update contains information about immigration regulations regarding international scholars and faculty that can be useful during the COVID-19 pandemic.

ISSS Processing Update #5
April 19, 2021

Effective immediately, ISSS will resume processing of all J-1 DS-2019s, including non-paid J-1 programs, with a start date on or after September 7, 2021, the Tuesday after Labor Day. This start date will provide time for U.S. embassies and consulates to slowly reopen and time for our scholars to schedule their appointments and receive their visas. Thereby, assisting departments in setting realistic start dates based on the following COVID-travel restrictions and bans:

- Presidential Proclamation 10143: *Proclamation on the Suspension of Entry as Immigrants and Non-Immigrants of Certain Additional Persons Who Pose a Risk of Transmitting Coronavirus Disease*
  This Proclamation applies to Noncitizens of the U.S. who were physically present within the **Schengen Area**, the **United Kingdom** (excluding overseas territories outside of Europe), **Ireland**, **South Africa** and **Brazil** during the 14-day period preceding their entry into the United States. For purposes of this proclamation, the Schengen Area comprises 26 European states: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland. This condition on entry applies to both immigrants and nonimmigrants attempting to enter the U.S. The proclamation limits entry for many visa categories.

  Of special note to the University of Maryland community, J-1/J-2, H-1/H-4, O-1 and TN visa holders are included in the travel restrictions. The end date of this restriction is undefined.
  - F-1 students have been granted an automatic national interest exception to this ban. We advise students to have this announcement from Customs and Border Protection available when traveling to campus since it confirms that airlines should allow students from these countries to board flights to the U.S. and may also be helpful at the U.S. port of entry.
  - J-1 students from the Schengen Area, the United Kingdom, and Ireland can request a "national interest exception" (NIE) when they apply for a visa.

- Presidential Proclamation 9984*: Proclamation on Suspension of Entry as Immigrants and Nonimmigrants of Persons who Pose a Risk of Transmitting 2019 Novel Coronavirus* Effective February 2, 2020, the U.S. government announced that it will deny entry to the U.S. of foreign nationals who have traveled to **China** within 14 days prior to arriving in the U.S. The end date of this restriction is undefined.

Presidential Proclamation 9992: *Proclamation on the Suspension of Entry as Immigrants and Non-Immigrants of Certain Additional Persons Who Pose a Risk of Transmitting Coronavirus Disease* Effective February 28,2020, the proclamation suspends the entry into the United States, as immigrants or nonimmigrants, of noncitizens who were physically present within the **Iran** during the 14-day period preceding their entry or attempted entry into the United States.

- On March 2nd, the State Department announced a new policy that will make it more challenging for nonimmigrant workers to obtain national interest exceptions under the regional bans, *Proclamation 10143* and *Proclamation 9984*, as listed above, from the European Schengen Area, the United Kingdom, and Ireland. The new policy became effective immediately and limits exceptions to those who will "provide vital support to critical infrastructure," as well as those who seek to enter the U.S. for purposes related to humanitarian travel, public health response, and security. *Therefore, this new policy will make it more difficult for J-1 exchange visitors from these regions to obtain national interest exceptions.*

- In response to significant worldwide challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department of State temporarily suspended routine visa services at all U.S. Embassies and Consulates. Today, many U.S. embassies and consulates abroad provide limited services for immigrant visas and emergencies only. The U.S. Department of State has more details published online. Check the website of the embassy or consulate for its current operating status: usembassy.gov

- Proclamation 10043: *Suspension of Entry as Nonimmigrants of Certain Students and Researchers from the People's Republic of China*.
  The proclamation, which became effective on May 29, 2020, *applies to students at the graduate level, post-doctoral level, or who are conducting research on an F or J visa suspends entry of Chinese citizens into the United States* if they have ever received funding from, been employed by, studied at, or conducted research at or on behalf of an entity in the People's Republic of China that implements or supports China's "military-civil fusion strategy." The proclamation does not automatically cancel existing visas of Chinese F and J nonimmigrants in the United States who would otherwise be covered by this ban. For more information on the impact of this proclamation on students who might be prevented from entering U.S. graduate programs this coming year, please refer to this CSET report.

- COVID-19 Testing Required for U.S. Entry. Effective January 26, 2021, the CDC requires all air passengers entering the U.S. to present a negative COVID-19 test within 3 days of departure or proof of recovery from the virus within the last 90 days.
  - Documentation of a negative COVID-19 test result within three calendar days prior to departure (if arriving via a connecting flight, each connection must be less than 24 hours and booked as a single passenger record); or
  - "Documentation of Recovery", which is written or electronic documentation of a positive viral test result that occurred within the prior three months (90 days) confirming a previous COVID-19 infection and a letter from a licensed health care provider or public health official stating that the passenger has been cleared for travel.

- Additional Information on changes to immigration processing and other impacts for UMD can be found at the ISSS website.

As you have surmised from the bullet items above, scholars will continue to have difficulty applying for a visa, traveling to the U.S., and settling into the UMD community. UMD departments and faculty who choose to host during this time should be cognizant of the additional conditions that they will need to manage. Departments and faculty who host scholars should be ready to support and assist with the following activities:

- Please select your J-1 program start dates carefully. The J-1 exchange visitor is required to enter the U.S. within 30 days from the start date in order for the record to be activated. If the Exchange Visitor is not able to arrive within the 30-day activation period, the record must be amended to a future start date. *To manage this process, ISSS will limit amendments to 60 days from the start date. Records that become inactive will require a new J-1 initial request in iTerp.*
- Please review 4Maryland requirements for quarantine and COVID testing with your scholar
    - COVID-19 Health and Safety Training & Pledge
    - COVID-19 Testing
    - Check my status – Is the scholar cleared to come to campus?
    - Confirming test results
    - Daily Symptom Check
- Review CDC guidelines for international travelers to determine if self-quarantine is necessary. Should the scholar need to quarantine, please formulate a plan for basic needs and communicate with the scholar during the quarantine period.
- Due to the State of Maryland's health insurance requirements, we urge you to consider using the 1st of each month as your start date for J-1 exchange visitors paid by the University of Maryland. If the paid scholar's employment does not begin on the 1st of the month, they will need health insurance to cover the gap between their arrival and the start of their UMD benefits. Please communicate this information to your scholars. Non-paid J-1 exchange visitors will be able to obtain health insurance starting on their date of arrival or their DS-2019 start date, whichever is later.
- Review housing and transportation resources
- Scholar will contact the social security administration to set up an appointment
    - Processing times are one to three months to receive an SSN
- Scholar will contact MVA to schedule an appointment for a driver's license. It is estimated to take between one to two months to secure an appointment.
- Scholar will need assistance with local resources:
    - Appointments and transportation are needed to visit local banks
    - Appointments and transportation are needed to visit rental properties
- For additional information, please refer to our presentation on Sponsoring a J-1 Exchange Visitor during COVID.

J-1 scholars may arrive 30 days before the DS-2019 start date. During this 30-day period, they can address many of these tasks listed above, but they will require your assistance.

If you have any questions, please contact an ISSS Faculty/Scholar Advisor.