Academic Colleagues,

Today’s message provides updates on the following topics: ISSS office hours and services, J-1 and H-1B processing changes, and funding requirements due to new faculty salary guidelines.

**Faculty/Scholar Staffing and Services**

**New Faculty and Scholar Graduate Assistant**

ISSS welcomes a new graduate assistant, Tambryanna Williams to the faculty/scholar advising team. She comes to ISSS from Northern Illinois University, where she served as a Student Success Advisor for two years. She was awarded her Bachelor’s degree in Spanish language and literature with a minor in political science from Northern Illinois University. Currently, she is pursuing a Master’s degree in Public Administration at the University of Maryland.

**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
- Read our [FAQs](#) during COVID-19

**Responding to Departmental Requests**

The most recent survey conducted by ISSS revealed a strong preference for ISSS mailing assistance with immigration documents. In response to this result, ISSS e-forms will be updated to include this option and a place for the department to upload a shipping label for express courier services, such as federal express and DHL.

**J-1 Exchange Visitor Program**

**J-1 minimum funding requirement**

Academic Affairs released the Faculty Salary Guidelines Fall 2021 which take effect on August 1st. These guidelines serve as the basis for the minimum funding requirement for the University's J-1 exchange visitor program. Therefore, all paid and non-paid J-1 visitors, under the category of Research Scholar,
Professor, and Short-Term Scholar, must provide a minimum proof of funding of $37,005 per year or $3,084.00 per month.

Additionally, the State of Maryland has increased the minimum wage to $11.75 per hour effective January 1, 2021. This minimum wage applies to all USM employees. All paid and unpaid J-1 visitors in the category of Student Intern must provide a minimum proof of funding in the amount of $2036.00 per month.

Processing of J-1 Requests

- **Initial J-1 DS-2019s must be submitted to ISSS 4 months before the start date.** This change in processing time is being implemented to allow 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 (including possible quarantine requirements) before starting their position. ISSS estimates that 3 weeks will be for DS-2019 processing. Requests are processed in the order that they are received.

- It is a best practice to submit J-1 Extension 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.

- **Use of Faculty Titles:** The J-1 status is limited to temporary position titles, such as post-doctoral 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. Log in instructions for iTerp are posted on the ISSS website. In some cases, the scholar may require assistance with scanning documents for upload into iTerp. iTerp accepts scans and photos of documents. Information about the online check-in process is sent to J-1 scholars prior to their arrival. For detailed instructions on the online documents check-in process, please review our website here.

• 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. This will allow newly arriving scholars to complete the check-in process and collect the information they need to settle into the community while complying with COVID-19 campus protocols.

**H-1B Temporary Worker**

**H-1B processing times**

H-1B Processing times for all requests require a minimum of a 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 their ability to renew their driver’s license. All of this contributes to higher levels of stress for departments, PIs and our employees. Please remember to review your appointment end dates for your H-1B employees. Processing with longer lead times will assist us all.

Requests for Further Evidence (RFE) on H-1B applications have increased. RFEs take 4 - 6 weeks to process as ISSS must work with the employee and the Department to gather new evidence for the immigration application. This sometimes requires the H-1B employee to work with prior employers and academic institutions to gather the evidence. ISSS works closely with the department to prepare a comprehensive and evidentiary response and this takes time. Once USCIS receives the University’s response, USCIS has 15 days to adjudicate the petition, under premium processing.

**Working Fund**

Departments will resume the task of collecting their USCIS checks from Working Fund and delivering them to ISSS.

**Have a Question?**

The office has a 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.

Making sure that you are satisfied and supported is important to ISSS. Please provide your comments and feedback to either Connie Jesse Lira or myself as we work to resume our on-campus activities.
Sincerely,
Susan-Ellis Dougherty
Director ISSS
And the ISSS Faculty/Scholar Advising Team