

University of Richmond

Office of International Education

Compliance with U.S. Immigration Laws & Regulations: The Role and Responsibility of the International Student/Scholar

After 9-11, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the U.S. Department of State (DOS) implemented new immigration regulations for non-immigrant students. SEVIS, the Student Exchange and Visitor Information System, is part of the new regulations. SEVIS is an Internet-based system that maintains current information on non-immigrant students (F and M visas), exchange visitors (J visa), and their dependents (F-2, M-2, and J-2). SEVIS enables educational institutions to transmit electronic information and event notifications via the Internet to DHS throughout a student or exchange visitor's stay in the U.S. The system will reflect status changes, such as admission at Port of Entry (POE), change of address, change in program of study, and other information. SEVIS will also provide system alerts, event notifications, and basic reports to the educational institution and immigration related offices. **It is critical that international students and scholars in F-1 and J-1 visa classifications maintain their legal status in the United States. Students and scholars must be aware of and comply fully with the following:**

- ❑ You must **maintain a valid passport** at all times.
- ❑ You must **attend the educational institution named** on your Form I-20/Form DS-2019.
- ❑ **J-1 students and scholars** and their dependents **must maintain the mandatory health insurance** that is required as part of their status at all times.
- ❑ You must **complete an official immigration transfer whenever you change educational institutions**. F-1 students must notify your current institution of your intent to transfer, obtain an I-20 from the new institution, and report to the International Student Advisor at the new school within 15 days of the program start date listed on the I-20. J-1 students and J-1 scholars must notify your current institution of your intent to transfer, obtain a new DS-2019 from the new institution, and report to the International Student Advisor at the new school by the start date on the new DS-2019.
- ❑ F-1 students and J-1 students **must enroll in and successfully complete a full-time (9 credits for graduate students; 12 credits for undergraduates) course of study each semester**. Exceptions to this requirement can only be made with advance authorization from the International Student Advisor in the Office of International Education. **A student who drops below a full-time course of study without prior authorization from the International Student Advisor will be considered out of status**. In the final semester of study, F-1 students are allowed to enroll in a reduced course of study if they need less than 12 credits to complete their degree program.
- ❑ You must **apply for an extension of your program of study prior to the expiration date** on your I-20 or DS-2019 if you cannot complete your program by that date. Requests for extensions, along with all supporting financial and academic documents should be submitted 30-60 days prior to the expiration date of the I-20 or DS-2019 so the extension process can be completed prior to the expiration date of the document. Students and scholars applying for extensions must show new financial documents proving financial ability to continue their stay in the US, as well as letters from their academic advisors/departments recommending the extension, explaining the reasons for the extension, and specifying a new completion date.
- ❑ You must **obtain a new I-20 or DS-2019 before changing your academic program** from one degree level to another (e.g., from Bachelor's to Master's level), one school to another (e.g., from the Business School to the Leadership School), or one major/field of study to another (e.g., from math to physics). You must receive authorization/permission from the International Student Advisor in advance.
- ❑ **You are NOT allowed to work in the United States without authorization**. F-1 and J-1 students are allowed to work on campus up to 20 hours per week when school is in session and 40 hours per week during

official school breaks (i.e. spring and winter breaks, summer). The University requires a minimum 2.0 GPA and enrollment in a minimum of 6 credit hours each semester. J-1 students are not allowed to work without their J-1 program sponsor's authorization. If you are a J-1 student from one of Richmond's partner institutions, you must request authorization from the International Student Advisor. J-1 students with another program sponsor (i.e. Fulbright, FSA Undergraduate Program, etc.) should contact their J-1 program sponsor directly. J-1 scholars may only work in the position and for the department indicated on their DS-2019. Requests for permission to engage in any additional employment, such as an occasional lecture, must be directed to the International Student Advisor prior to beginning any such employment.

- ❑ **You must report any change of address or residence in the U.S. and/or any change of name** directly to the International Student Advisor by using the Form AR-11, which can be downloaded from the Office of International Education's website, within 10 days of the change. The International Student Advisor will then electronically notify the DHS of the change within 21 days using SEVIS.
- ❑ **You must notify the International Student Advisor prior to traveling outside the U.S.** so that your I-20 or DS-2019 can be endorsed for travel, or a new form can be issued, if required. Students and scholars who are traveling and who need new forms must request these forms from the International Student Advisor at least 1 week prior to their anticipated travel date, although you are strongly encouraged to apply even earlier.
- ❑ You must **notify the International Student Advisor of any accompanying dependents** in F-2 or J-2 status and provide biographical information (e.g., full name, address, country of birth, etc.) and immigration information (e.g., passport information, visa information, etc.), as well as financial support documentation regarding those dependents. The International Student Advisor will then issue new SEVIS I-20 and DS-2019 forms for them.
- ❑ **Please keep your I-20/DS-2019, I-94 card, passport, and visa in a safe place.** Keep these documents on your person when you travel and ALWAYS use registered mail or other services that can track documents (i.e. Federal Express, DHL) if you must send your passport or other immigration documents in the mail.
- ❑ **J-1 visa holders** should note the contact information for Exchange Visitor Program Services:
United States Department of State
Office of Exchange Coordination and Designation
ECA/EC/AG - SA-44, Room 820
301 4th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20547
Telephone: (202) 203-5029 **Fax:** (202) 453-8640 **Email:** jvisas@state.gov

IMPORTANT NOTE: This information is not exhaustive and is subject to change without notice. International students and scholars should contact the International Student Advisor to arrange an appointment to discuss any questions or concerns related to their legal status in the United States.

For current information on changes in U.S. immigration law and/or changes in University policy and procedures, **please read all email messages from the International Student Advisor.** The Office of International Education's website is also an important resource for a variety of important information regarding your stay in the United States. To access the site, go to <http://oncampus.richmond.edu/academics/international/Intstudents/index.shtml>

"I have read the information above about maintaining my legal status in the United States and understand that I must comply fully with these regulations in order to remain in legal status. I further understand that this information is not exhaustive and that I should direct any additional questions or concerns about my legal status to the International Student Advisor in the Office of International Education.

Print Name: _____ Signature: _____

Date: _____