I. Purpose and Scope

As part of the university’s growing commitment to internationalization, WKU has encouraged colleges, departments, and individual faculty members to seek relationships with institutions and scholars in other countries. One means to achieve that objective is through the U.S. Department of State managed Exchange Visitor Program. Under this program colleges and universities in this country are able to sponsor international exchanges of faculty, scholars and students.

II. Policy

1. International faculty and students who participate in this program will enter the U.S. under the J-1 Exchange Visitor Visa program. J-1 Visas are issued to exchange visitors based on the sponsorship of a host institution, in our case Western Kentucky University. The purpose of the program is “to provide foreign nationals with opportunities to participate in educational and cultural programs in the United States and return home to share their experiences, and to encourage Americans to participate in educational and cultural programs in other countries.”

2. The J-1 Exchange Visitor program incorporates several requirements including: (a) reciprocity; the program is intended to promote a true international exchange so there must be some flow of faculty, scholars and students in both directions; (b) financial support; the sponsor must show that there is sufficient financial support to meet the living needs of a visiting scholar; (c) teaching, research, or study opportunities; the visiting
The scholar must have a planned set of scholarly activities; and (d) cross-cultural experiences; the sponsor must provide opportunities for visiting scholars to learn about American culture and society (and to improve their English language skills) with the intent being that the visitors carry a positive impression of the U.S. back to their home country. The Office of International Programs at Western is responsible for monitoring the university’s participation in the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program and for helping ensure that these requirements are met.

3. J-1 Exchange Visitors may come for varying periods of time with the possibility of renewal in some cases. Usually, though not always, exchange visitors return to their home countries upon the completion of their sponsored stay in the U.S. Depending upon the Exchange Visitor category in which they are admitted to the U.S., Exchange Visitors may engage in study (from degree-seeking to informal), teaching, or research (including individually-funded and institutionally-funded research). Some J-1 Exchange Visitors thus may become employees of the university, usually with either teaching or research responsibilities (or both).

4. If J-1 Exchange Visitors become university employees, then, in addition to complying with visa requirements, the exchange visitors will also work in compliance with standard university personnel policies as they apply to this special category of short-term Exchange Visitors. Since these Exchange Visitors are normally identified and assigned through international interuniversity exchange agreements, their appointment to the university will not follow standard university affirmative action policies. The Department of Human Resources at Western is responsible for monitoring the working conditions of exchange visitors who are employed by the university in the same way they would any other university employee.

5. The goal of the university is to strengthen international connections, including expanded participation in the U.S. Department of State Exchange Visitor Program. As we do so, we want to ensure that exchange visitors have a positive experience in building their knowledge and skills while learning more about the people, culture and institutions of the United States.

III. Procedure

A. Specific Guidelines:

1. Colleges, departments, or individual faculty members wishing to recommend university sponsorship for an international exchange visitor should contact the Office of International Programs (OIP) for advice on non-immigrant visa requirements. The sponsoring unit must provide OIP with the information/documentation necessary for university sponsorship of a potential visitor’s visa application. Sponsoring units should consult the Office of International Programs website <http:oip.wku.edu> for details and timelines.
2. The OIP will complete the immigration documents necessary for proposed university sponsorship of an exchange visitor.

3. Depending on the terms negotiated, the sponsoring unit will be responsible for arranging or identifying support for transportation (local and international), housing, meals, office and lab space, stipends, health insurance, salary and benefits (if applicable), and English language instruction (if needed) for the exchange visitor.

4. The exchange visitor is required to check in with the OIP within three days of arrival on campus. OIP staff will provide a general orientation to the university and to the provisions of the exchange visitor program. Their arrival and departure will be officially reported the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (in accordance with federal regulations). The sponsoring unit will be responsible for notifying the OIP, in a timely manner, of the departure-especially early departure- of any exchange visitor attached to that unit.

5. If the exchange visitor is to be employed by the university, the Department of Human Resources will provide the exchange visitor with a standard orientation that includes employee rights, responsibilities, benefits, etc. Appointments of exchange visitors who are to be employed by the university will be handled in a manner similar to graduate assistant appointments, that is, through simply processing a Form 4 that describes the specific terms of employment. Employed exchange visitors will be paid a stipend at a fixed monthly rate for a specific appointment period (as opposed to an hourly rate), with clearly understood work responsibilities.

6. With the cooperation of the sponsoring unit, OIP staff will seek to provide exchange visitors with opportunities for cross-cultural learning experiences including exposure to American people, culture, and institutions.

7. The sponsoring unit is responsible for monitoring the day-to-day well being of exchange visitors. A lead faculty or professional staff person in the sponsoring unit should be designated for this purpose. Among other things, the lead faculty or professional staff person will insure that all applicable university policies and procedures are followed.

8. Depending on the Exchange Visitor category, sponsoring units will provide each of their exchange visitors with a clear statement of expectations for study, teaching and/or research activities, including overall workload, during the period of the exchange visitor’s residency. For exchange visitors employed by the university, a copy of that statement will be filed with the Department of Human Resources.

9. Since Exchange Visitors fall into a special category of affiliation with the university, they will not usually have access to the standard student, faculty or staff complaint procedures. If an Exchange Visitor has a complaint, they may direct that complaint to their supervisor. If unsatisfied, the Exchange Visitor can present their complaint to the head of the department and/or the college dean and provost. As an alternative to working through their supervisor, the Visiting Scholar may address a complaint to the Director of International Services in the OIP. If unresolved, the Director of International Services will forward the complaint to the chief international officer (currently the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs) who will, in turn, inform and work with
the appropriate college dean to resolve the complaint. While maintaining appropriate confidentiality, the college dean will endeavor to keep the sponsoring unit informed of the progress and resolution of the complaint.

10. The Office of Human Resources, the Office of International Programs, and the Office of Academic Affairs will all maintain appropriate files on each individual Exchange Visitor hosted by the university.

IV. Exclusions

V. Related Policies

See also:

VI. Reason for Revision

Appendices: