J-1 Scholar Pre-Arrival Guide
We are looking forward to having YOU join the NC State community!

NC State is a pre-eminent research enterprise that faces and overcomes global challenges. We work with leading partners and use cutting-edge technologies to develop world-changing solutions. The staff and volunteers at the Office of International Services (OIS) are committed to NC State University’s global mission and vision and we invite you to join us as we help prepare world citizens and develop global leaders here in North Carolina.

Please read this guide carefully. It gives important information on the J-1 Exchange Program, your visa application process, your rights and responsibilities as a J-1 Scholar, and practical resources to help you get settled at NC State.
The J-1 Exchange Visitor Program is a federal program administered by the Department of State, which implements the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961. This Act promotes mutual understanding between the peoples of the United States and other countries by means of educational and cultural exchange. The Exchange Visitor Program provides eligible foreign nationals with opportunities to participate in exchange programs in the United States and then return home to share their experiences.

The J-1 Exchange Visitor Program is organized into a number of different categories. The Office of International Services (OIS) at NC State has been designated to sponsor the following categories: student, student intern, professor, research scholar, and short-term scholar. OIS staff are trained immigration advisors who can help you understand the applicable federal, state, and university regulations.

It is important to remember that the Exchange Visitor Program at NC State University is not an expedient means of employing foreign nationals (or, from the scholar’s point of view, for working in the U.S.), but is intended to further the educational, cultural, and research interests of the international student or scholar as much as the needs of the faculty sponsor, grant program, or University.

In accepting a J-1 visa and entering the U.S., you obligate yourself to comply with the terms and conditions pursuant to this status and as stated on page 2 of your DS-2019 form. Please read your DS-2019 carefully.

Attached to this guide you will find the statement with your Rights & Responsibilities. Please read each statement, sign and date at the bottom of the form, and bring this form with you to your Check-In appointment at the Office of International Services upon your arrival (your host department will schedule this Check-In appointment for you).

You are required to maintain health insurance for the entire duration of your DS-2019. This also applies to dependents in J-2 status. The health insurance you purchase must meet certain standards. Please note that failure to maintain adequate health insurance for yourself and all dependents is considered a violation of the Exchange Visitor Program regulations, which will result in termination of your J-1 program and the visa status for the principal and dependents. Please visit the OIS website for detailed information.

English proficiency is required to participate in the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program. Your sponsor department will be required to evaluate and certify your English language proficiency.

The J-1 Exchange Visitor Program is “category” specific. You are not eligible to change the purpose of your visit or your category once you have entered the U.S.

If you enter the U.S. in the J-1 Short Term Scholar category, you will have a maximum time limit of 6 months of participation with no possibility of extension.

If you enter the U.S. in the J-1 Research Scholar or Professor category, you will have a maximum time limit of 5 years of participation. Research Scholars and Professors are subject to a 24-month bar on repeat participation. This means that after you have been in the U.S. as a J-1 Research Scholar or Professor, you are ineligible to begin a new program as a J-1 Research Scholar or Professor until you have been physically absent from the U.S. for 24 months.

Any of the J-1 categories may be subject to the 2-year home residency requirement. Whether or not you are subject is determined at the U.S. Consulate/Embassy. For more information about the 2-year residency requirement, please visit the OIS website.

Keep in mind that any family members who accompany you in J-2 status are automatically subject to any rule you, the J-1 principal, are subject to. Family members can apply for J-2 status if they are your lawful spouse or children (under the age of 21).
MANDATORY HEALTH INSURANCE

The Department of State (DOS) requires all participants of the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program to have and maintain health insurance which covers the exchange visitor and all accompanying family members for the entire duration of their DS-2019 - even if the dependents (J-2) are arriving in the U.S. at a later date of the principal (J-1). Please note that this requirement holds even if you or your family members are temporarily abroad. Proof of health insurance for J-1 and J-2s must be provided at the OIS Check-In appointment. The health insurance plan must cover all participants for accidents, sickness, medical evacuation and repatriation: the regulations currently require at least $100,000 per accident or illness, US$50,000 provision for medical evacuation, US$25,000 minimum repatriation coverage, and US$500 maximum deductible per illness.

The minimum coverage amounts are US$100,000 per accident or illness; US$50,000 provision for medical evacuation; US$25,000 minimum repatriation coverage, and US$500 maximum deductible per accident or illness.

Visit the OIS website to find a list of health insurance providers which offer the above coverage that meet the requirements above. Health insurance costs vary based on age, healthcare needs, and number of persons covered.

NC State University has contracted with GeoBlue, an international health insurance provider, to offer our J-1 scholars a vetted option for quality coverage. GeoBlue is open to international scholars and their dependents under the age of 64 years old. Scholars can self-enroll in this plan without the assistance of the university. Read more about GeoBlue on our website: https://internationalservices.ncsu.edu/health-insurance-j1/

Applying for the J-1 Visa at the U.S. Consulate/Embassy:

Step 1: Check your documents; make sure you check the DS-2019 form carefully to ensure the information is correct. If you believe there is an error, please contact OIS directly (ois@ncsu.edu). Your passport needs to be valid at least 6 months into the future at all times (during the visa application process and your stay in the U.S.).

Step 2: Pay the SEVIS fee ($180) with Form I-901. Make sure to print the confirmation of payment of this fee; you will need it for your visa application. For more information and how to pay, please visit: https://www.fmjfee.com/i901fee/

Step 3: Apply for the J-1 visa with the nearest U.S. Consulate/Embassy. Please refer to the Embassy’s website for detailed information on which documents to bring and when to visit them for your visa interview. For a list of all Embassies, please visit: http://www.usembassy.gov/

**Family members (J-2 status) will have to apply for their own visa and pay applicable visa fees. They do not have to pay the SEVIS fee as your fee covers dependents on J-2 visas.

Step 4: Review the health insurance requirements for you and dependents that are traveling to the U.S. All J-1 Scholars and dependents MUST have valid health insurance throughout the duration of their DS-2019.

Please Note: Failure to maintain adequate health insurance for the principal (J-1) and dependents (J-2) throughout the duration of your DS-2019 is considered to be a violation of the Exchange Visitor Program regulations, which will result in termination from the program.
WHAT TO BRING

Do not bring too many items from home that can easily be bought in the U.S. Be sure to bring enough toiletries with you to last several days upon arrival. You do not know how soon you may be able to go to a store to buy the basic necessities. Raleigh has many ethnic grocery stores, a Farmers Market (where you can buy local, fresh vegetables/fruits) and large shopping centers. Many foods from your country can be bought in Raleigh, too! A list of ethnic grocery stores can be found on the OIS website.

Clothing
Check with your department regarding specific dress code. A good raincoat or umbrella is necessary. You will also need a coat for cold weather.

Electrical Items
The U.S. uses 110v electrical current. Many small electrical items like hair dryers and electric razors are inexpensive in the U.S. and you may wish to purchase those items when you arrive. If you bring a computer, or other electrical items, you may buy a simple plug adapter in the U.S.

Linens and Towels
Bed linens, pillows, blankets and towels can be purchased inexpensively in Raleigh. Past Scholars have suggested bringing one set of linens and towels for the first days you are here, then purchasing more if you need to.

Medical Items
Make sure that any prescription medications you bring are labeled and in their original containers. The name on the container should match the name on your passport to avoid any problems when you are entering the U.S. Please bring a copy of any prescriptions you will need using the generic name of the medication in English.

Money
Make sure your ATM card will work in the U.S. before you leave your home country! The Cirrus, Plus, Mastercard and Visa systems are the most widely accepted. We recommend you have access to enough funds to cover immediate expenses. We recommend you have at least $1,000 in hard currency, travelers checks or pre-paid cards in case you need quick access to cash when you first arrive. You can change your money at a local bank. There may be a conversion fee, but it will probably be less than the fee at the airport.

Average Temperatures in Celsius

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HOUSING

There are a number of short-term and long-term housing options for you around the NC State campus. Please find below a list of resources and helpful websites to aid you in your search as well as tips on what to be mindful of when renting in the U.S.

On-Campus Housing Options
University Housing at NC State invites you to be our guest and stay in one of our accommodations located either at the Avent Ferry Guest Complex or E.S. King Village. These are comfortable, convenient, and economical alternatives for guests affiliated with the University who want to stay close to campus. More information can be found on the E.S. King website. Temporary guest housing can be reserved at the Avent Ferry Guest Complex for $35.00 per night. You must submit a reservation request on their website.

**Please note that on-campus housing is limited and may not be available for the dates of your stay. For questions regarding availability, please contact University Housing at housing@ncsu.edu or 1.919.515.2440. Do not wait until you arrive in the U.S. to inquire about on-campus housing options!**

Off-Campus Housing Options
Raleigh is a rapidly developing city and securing affordable off campus housing may be a challenge due to current demand. It is important to secure accommodations as early as possible. Please find a list of resources to aid you in your search on the OIS website.
Arrival in the U.S.

At the Airport (or Port of Entry)
You will be asked to show your documents in the first city in which you arrive in the United States to be given permission to enter the country.

Please carry with you (in your carry-on bag, NOT in your checked baggage):
- Your Passport with J-1 visa stamp
- DS-2019 Form
- The supporting documentation that you showed to the United States Embassy to obtain the visa.

You Have Arrived - A short video produced by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection that explains what to expect at the Port of Entry. PLEASE NOTE: International students and scholars are not eligible to use the Global Entry system mentioned in the video.

I-94 Arrival/Departure Record
Customs and Border Protection (CBP) will issue you an electronic I-94 record of arrival when you enter the U.S. You need to retrieve and print your I-94 from the CBP website AFTER you arrive in the U.S. You should do this as soon as you have access to a computer with printer. Review your I-94 to be sure the information is correct. Make sure this form shows your admission class as “J-1” and admit until date as “D/S”. Your dependents should show J-2 as the class of admission. If there are any discrepancies, please notify OIS.

You need to print your I-94 before you attend your check-in appointment with OIS. Also, if you have employment on campus such as a TA or RA your department will need the I-94 to complete your hiring paperwork. Please print multiple copies of the I-94 for these purposes.

More information about the I-94 can be found on the CBP website.

IMPORTANT: You should enter the U.S. no more than 30 days prior to the start date on your DS-2019 form. If you are unable to enter the U.S. within 7 days after the start date on your DS-2019, you should notify your department at NC State of your expected arrival date.

Directions to NC State University: If you choose to take a taxi or shuttle from the airport to campus, it’s important that you ask the driver to take you to NC State University, not the University of North Carolina (a different university in Chapel Hill!)

Taxis: A taxi ride from the RDU airport to campus is around $30-$35. There are several taxi companies in the Raleigh area that service the airport. Taxis can be found on the lower level of the airport, directly outside of the baggage claim area.

Trains and Buses: Amtrak train and Greyhound bus services are available to Raleigh from various Ports of Entry into the U.S. The nearest Amtrak train and Greyhound bus stations are located in downtown Raleigh (about 5 minutes by taxi from the university). The GoTriangle Raleigh-Airport-RTC #100 bus route can be used for transportation from the RDU Airport directly to NC State’s main campus (Hillsborough St. & Brooks Ave.). A single, one-way trip from RDU to NC State will cost $2.25, which must be paid in cash/hard currency. After arriving on campus you can then take the free Wolfline buses, or the GoRaleigh buses ($1.25 for a one-way fare) to nearby on-campus housing and apartment complexes.

Please note that basic safety precautions need to be taken when at train and bus stations. Pay attention to your baggage, money, and personal belongings.
TO-DO LIST AT NC STATE

- **Meet with Department:** Meet with your supervisor in your host department to become familiar with your workplace and complete any necessary paperwork with the personnel representative of the department. You will receive your Campus ID number from the personnel representative.

- **OIS Check-in:** Your department at NC State will schedule your check-in appointment with OIS. Check-in is mandatory. Bring the following documents/information to your appointment: passport, visa, DS-2019, I-94, proof of health insurance for both principal and dependents, and local U.S. address.

- **Spouse Check-in:** If your spouse accompanied you to the U.S. or will soon join you, make sure to sign him/her up for the Spouse Check-in. You can sign up for a Spouse Check-in on the OIS website. This is a great opportunity for them to become familiar with the NC State Campus community and learn about available resources and programs.

- **Campus ID Card:** Obtain a Wolfpack OneCard (Campus ID) at the Wolfpack OneCard Office in the Talley Student Union, open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. You will need to take your passport and DS-2019 document to receive your Campus ID.

- **SSN Application:** If you are going to receive payment from NC State, you need to apply for a Social Security Number (SSN). You should apply for the SSN at your earliest convenience; however, no sooner than 10 days after your arrival and 5 days after your OIS check-in. Visit the OIS website for more information.

- **Get Involved:** Familiarize yourself with the cross-cultural programs at NC State University. More info on pages T.

- **Taxes:** If you receive payment from NC State, you must meet with the International Compensation & Taxation Office to set up your tax withholdings. Please email ICTquestions@ncsu.edu to schedule an appointment.

- **Open a U.S. Bank Account:** We recommend that you open a bank account with one of the banks located close to campus. Take all of your immigration documents with you. Visit the OIS website for more details and locations.

- **Language Resources:** Visit the OIS website to get more information about English language resources on campus if you would like to practice your English skills.

- **Be Safe:** Take note of the NC State safety procedures and the services available for you through Campus Police. More information can be found on the OIS website.
Living in Raleigh

There is something for everyone in Raleigh! Raleigh has world class museums, open-air amphitheaters, music venues, historic sites, professional theater companies, award-winning restaurants, professional sports, and vibrant festivals. To learn more about what the Raleigh area has to offer, visit the following resources:

- Indy Week - A weekly guide to local art, music, and events
- Triangle City Search - Find local restaurants and events
- Downtown Raleigh Guide
- City of Raleigh Visitor's Guide
- The News & Observer - Raleigh’s Newspaper
- Ethnic Restaurants and International Grocery Stores in Raleigh

Public Transportation and the GoPass

The NC State bus line, called the “Wolfline,” is free for anyone in the community. After obtaining a GoPass from University Transportation for a fee ($5/month or $60/year), scholars can also ride the GoTriangle (regional) and GoRaleigh (city) buses for free. Please Note: University Transportation is NOT able to mail GoPasses to international addresses. If you do not have a permanent Raleigh address, you may have your GoPass mailed to a friend in Raleigh (be sure to ask for their permission first!) or pick it up at the University Transportation office. Your GoPass will be delivered to the address you provide two weeks after completing the registration form. Without a GoPass, the cost of one-way fare is $2.25 for GoTriangle buses and $1.25 for GoRaleigh buses. To track buses in real-time, you can check the Transloc website or download the TransLoc Rider app.

Driving and Car Insurance in the U.S.

If you plan to drive in the U.S., you are permitted to drive with a license issued by your home country for up to 60 days after your arrival date. After 60 days, you will be required by law to have a North Carolina Driver’s License if you wish to continue driving in the U.S. The “International Driver’s License” is not valid in the state of North Carolina.

Please Note: When driving in the United States, you must have your driver’s license with you at all times.

If you plan to purchase a car in the U.S., it is recommended that you bring a certified letter from your car insurance company confirming your driving record in your home country. Such a letter might reduce high car insurance rates from American companies. Purchasing car insurance is a law for all North Carolina drivers. For more information about driving in NC, visit the Division of Motor Vehicles website.

Cell Phones and Emergency Phone Calls

There are many cell phone companies so do some research to determine which plans are most advantageous for your calling destination. Some companies include: Verizon, AT&T, Sprint, and T-Mobile. Most companies want you to sign a 1-2 year contract (especially if you want a free/cheap phone) and want you to have a Social Security number. If you don’t want to sign a contract or don’t have a Social Security number, you can buy “pre-paid” phone plans and pay for the phone.

For emergencies within the U.S. (i.e. car accident, deep cuts, etc.) the emergency assistance number is 911. If there is an emergency and you need to quickly reach someone outside of the country, you can contact the international operator by dialing #00. This service may be a bit expensive but convenient in the case of an emergency.
Local Events & Festivals

Ongoing Events

First Friday — A free self-guided tour of downtown’s cutting edge cultural hot spots. Local art galleries, art studios, alternative art venues, and museums stay open late the first Friday of every month to welcome thousands of art-seeking enthusiasts downtown.

Food Truck Rodeos — Food Trucks and Restaurants spread out over 11 city blocks on Fayetteville Street in downtown Raleigh. Food truck rodeos are great opportunities to try local food!

Theatre in the Park — Theatre In The Park, located in scenic Pullen Park right next to NC State’s main campus, is internationally acclaimed for its outstanding theatrical achievements. Tickets are $16.

Local Events and Festivals

Mid August: Wolfpack Welcome Week — Nearly 100 events on campus throughout the week!
Mid August: Packapalooza — Hillsborough Street next to NC State’s Main Campus
Early September: African American Cultural Festival — Downtown Raleigh — Fayetteville Street
Early September: Hopscotch Music Festival — Downtown Raleigh — Fayetteville Street
Late September: Wide Open Bluegrass Festival — Downtown Raleigh — Fayetteville Street
Mid October: International Festival of Raleigh — Downtown Raleigh — Convention Center
Mid October: North Carolina State Fair — North Carolina State Fairgrounds
December: Raleigh Winterfest — Downtown Raleigh— Fayetteville Street

Raleigh Area Resources

Go Live, Work, Play Raleigh — Downtown Raleigh Guide
GoTriangle Regional Buses / GoRaleigh City Buses / Triangle Transloc (Bus Locator) / Triangle Transloc Rider App
Indy Week — Weekly guide to local art, music, and events
Museums in Raleigh — Most of Raleigh’s museums are free!
NC Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV) — NC Driver’s License
One Day Tour of Raleigh — Itinerary for a walking tour of downtown Raleigh
Pullen Arts Center — Offers non-credit bearing arts and crafts classes right next to campus
Raleigh Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources — Offers a variety of programs and events.
Visit Raleigh Tourism — Things to do, museums, restaurants, and events
OIS Programs

The Office of International Services has several programs to help international scholars meet Americans and vice versa. If you are interested in learning more about American culture or teaching others about your own culture, you may want to join these programs. You can find more information, including applications, on the OIS Programs' website.

Breaking Bread gives international scholars the chance to have a meal with a local family at their home. This is a fun way to learn more about America and have a nice, home-cooked meal! An application is required.

Culture Corps is an opportunity to share your country and culture with others at NC State and in the surrounding community. Culture Corps members often give presentations in school classrooms or for community organizations. It’s a great way to practice your English and your presentation skills. An application is required.

ISSERV connects international students and scholars with service projects at NC State and in the Raleigh community. It’s a great way to meet new people with interests similar to yours! You can volunteer individually or with a group. An application is required.
**English Conversation Club** is a fun place to practice your English with native speakers and to learn idioms and slang. To see this semester’s English Conversation Club (ECC) locations and schedule, check the ECC page.

**Cultural Crossroads** is a weekly meet up for a new discussion about cultural diversity and living in the U.S. No registration is required. Meetings take place every Wednesday from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. Follow the entire series or attend the discussions that interest you the most! Check the Cultural Crossroads web page for more information and the schedule.

**IMOM (International Moms or Mates)** is a group for spouses of international students and scholars at NC State. Scholars are encouraged to schedule a separate check-in appointment for their spouses. All spouses are advised to bring their travel documents with them to the check-in (I-20 or DS-2019, passport, I-94 record printout, proof of health insurance). For pre-arrival and resource guides for spouses, check the IMOM page.
Campus Resources

Email and Computer Access

Your NC State email (Unity ID) account and password are established as soon as your host department completes your hiring process as an Exchange Visitor at NC State. Check with your department to determine when you will receive your Unity ID and password. Your NC State email address will be in the following format: YourUnityID@ncsu.edu. You can access your NC State email from outside the U.S. if you know your Unity ID and password. Your default password is the last four digits of your Campus ID number which you will receive from your department, plus the four digits of your birth month and day. For example, if your Campus ID number ends in 1234 and your birthday is January 31, then your initial password is 12340131. The default password can only be used to create a new, secure password via the Unity Password Change Tool. You need to change your password before accessing your NC State email or MyPack Portal.

Once you arrive on campus, you will need your Unity ID and password to log in to the computers at NC State. If you have problems accessing your email, visit the Office of Information Technology’s (OIT) website or contact the OIT Help Desk by phone at (919) 515-4357 or by email at help@ncsu.edu.

Special Accommodations

If you have any special needs for accommodation in terms of physical access, or you have a learning disability, or other circumstance or issue that requires our special attention, please let us know. You may be able to benefit from some of the campus resources dedicated to helping all students and scholars succeed. For further information please contact an OIS staff member or the Disability Services Office at NC State.

Speech-to-Speech (STS): This service, provides communication assistants (CAs) for people with difficulty being understood by the public on the telephone. The Speech-to-Speech access number for North Carolina is 1-877-735-8261.

Text Access: Text access translates auditory information into text to be read on a computer or other display device. Visit this website to learn more about Text Access at NC State.

Assistive Listening Devices: For persons with hearing aids or who have difficulty hearing, the Disability Services Office can provide assistance for your use during class. Visit the Disability Services Office’s website to learn more about ALD use on campus: dso.dasa.ncsu.edu

Accessible Classrooms & Buildings On Campus: NC State upholds strict regulations regarding building and classroom accessibility.

For more information about the Disability Services offered at NC State University, please visit their website.
Library Services
NC State’s main libraries are D.H. Hill Library (North Campus) and Hunt Library (Centennial Campus). There are several other specialized libraries located on campus. You can access their websites from the main NC State Libraries website. You will automatically have access to the libraries with your Campus ID card: you can check out books, use their computer labs, and access other services. The NC State Libraries website offers many tools in order to further your success at NC State. Tools like the Academic Search Premier, Technology Lending, Research Guides, and Citation builders will enhance scholarly writing and are available through the library website.

Campus Recreation
NC State has a very elaborate Recreation Center: the Rec Center is located in the Carmichael Complex and includes a fully equipped gymnasium, swimming pools, outdoor sporting facilities, and a variety of fitness classes (yoga, indoor and outdoor club sports, fitness, etc.). They also offer affordable rentals for camping and other outdoor activity equipment. You can request full access to the Recreation Center with your Campus ID card. Scholars and their family members will be charged a monthly fee to access the Rec Center facilities. You can find rates and additional information on the University Recreation website.

Campus Safety
The NC State Police Department is responsible for maintaining a safe and pleasant environment in which to live and learn. Concerned with the protection of life and property, the Campus Police officers enforce both the laws of the state of North Carolina and regulations of the university. Emergency blue light telephones have been placed around campus for your safety. These phones are distinctly marked with a red phone box attached to a white pole with a blue-lighted bulb on top. When activated, you will be in immediate voice contact with a Campus Police Officer. The officer will also receive a digital readout pinpointing your exact location.

Emergency Number: For emergencies, always dial 911. To reach the Campus Police directly call (919) 515-3000.

Safety Escort Service: The University Police Department provides a safety escort service to protect students, scholars, faculty and staff on campus between the hours of 10 p.m. and 4 a.m., as long as weather is safe for operation. In the hours prior to 10 p.m., the police department encourages anyone traveling on campus to walk in well lighted areas with groups of people or to use the Wolfline Bus Service.

To request a Safety Escort, call (919) 515-3000. A security guard will meet you at your location and will provide a safety escort anywhere on campus including outer areas such as, but not limited to: the Vet School, the Avent Ferry Complex and Centennial Campus during the 10 p.m. to 4 a.m. time period.

NC State University is dedicated to equality of opportunity. The university does not condone discrimination against students, employees, or applicants in any form. NC State commits itself to positive action to secure equal opportunity regardless of race, color, creed, national origin, religion, sex, age, or disability. In addition, NC State welcomes all persons without regard to sexual orientation.