What is the Exchange Visitor Program?

The Exchange Visitor Program is managed by the U.S. Department of State (DOS). The J-1 non-immigrant visa category for individuals approved to participate in work-and study-based exchange visitor programs. At MICA, the Exchange Visitor program is designed to facilitate cross-cultural educational exchange. We believe that scholars from outside the United States infuse the MICA campus with extraordinary talent broad perspective. We expect participants in the Exchange Visitor Program to immerse themselves in the MICA campus and culture, upon returning to their home campus, share the skills, culture and information obtained at MICA.

J-1 Exchange Visitors may be invited to MICA under one of the following categories:

- **Professor**: The exchange visitor’s main activity must be teaching. Maximum length of 5 years. Professors are subject to a 2-year bar on repeat participation in the professor or research category upon completion of the program regardless of length.
- **Research Scholar**: The exchange visitor’s main activity must be research. Maximum length of 5 years. Research Scholars are subject to a 2-year bar on repeat participation in the professor or research category upon completion of the program regardless of length.
- **Short-Term Scholar**: The exchange visitor’s main activity must be teaching, training, or researching. The maximum length is 6 months. There are no bars on future participation as a J-1 exchange visitor.

Steps to Apply to Host a Research Scholar, Short Term Scholar, and Professor:

1. MICA Department submits a completed J-1 Exchange Visitor Request to the Office of International Education
2. English Language Proficiency interviews are arranged
3. The Office of International Education sends a DS-2019 to the Exchange Visitor
4. Exchange Visitor schedules and J-1 visa interview appointment at an embassy/U.S. Consulate
5. Exchange Visitor interviews for J-1 visa and waits for approval (Processing times vary)
6. Exchange Visitor contacts MICA when J-1 visa is obtained
7. MICA Human Resources will send employment contract (if applicable) to the Exchange Visitor
8. The Exchange Visitor travels to the U.S. no earlier than 30 days of the MICA start date and checks-in with International Education for an Orientation. A late check-in may impact the Exchange Visitor’s status and ability to obtain a Social Security Number, if applicable.
9. Exchange Visitor applies for a Social Security Number
10. Exchange Visitor begins research or contract with MICA department.

Questions? Please contact:
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Hosting a J-1 Visa Exchange Visitor

MICA must follow government regulations that govern the sponsorship of international exchange visitors. All information requested in this packet is required in order for the Office of International Education to process documents needed so that MICA can sponsor an exchange visitor. Once this packet has been completed and returned to International Education by the sponsoring department, documents will be processed that will allow the exchange visitor to apply for a J-1 visa. Please submit all required information to International Education a minimum of four months prior to the exchange visitor’s intended start date. MICA’s background checks and the visa process itself can take several weeks, with several months possible in some cases where applications are flagged.

Hosting a J-1 Visa Exchange Visitor Checklist

At Least 4 Months Prior to Exchange Visitor Start Date:

- **Department Contact:** Identify a faculty member in the department who will host the exchange visitor and act as a liaison to International Education.
- **J-1 Exchange Visitor Request:** Complete the request form to host an international exchange visitor (included in this packet). A copy of the visitor’s current curriculum vitae should be included.
- **Verification of English Language Proficiency:** Determine English proficiency using an objective measure (see additional information in this packet).
- **Copy of Passport:** Obtain a copy of the exchange visitor’s passport and the passports of all dependents.
- **Invitation Letter:** After verification of English language proficiency, ask the Office of Research to issue a formal letter of invitation for J-1 research scholars (see template in this packet). Teaching scholars must follow the standard contract process managed by the Provost’s Office.
- **Documentation of Funding:** For research scholars, ask the exchange visitor to provide documentation of funding to cover all expenses associated with their time at MICA (see additional information in this packet).
- **Health Insurance:** Make sure the exchange visitor understands that the US government requires all J-1 visa holders to maintain a health insurance policy that meets or exceeds specific coverage minimums throughout the dates listed on the DS-1019 Form. If a J-1 scholar or dependent refuses to maintain proper health insurance, the J-1 status will be terminated. The minimum benefits required by the US government are as follows:
  - Medical benefits of at least $100,000 per accident or illness
  - Repatriation of remains in the amount of $25,000
  - Expenses for medical evacuation to home country in the amount of $50,000
  - A deductible not to exceed $500 per accident or illness

J-1 research scholars will be responsible for selecting before arrival, obtaining and maintaining an insurance plan. J-1 professors will either be responsible for selecting, obtaining and maintaining an insurance plan or will be covered under MICA’s health insurance (depending on the terms of the hire contract).

**Health Insurance Plans for J-1 Visitors**

Insurance plans that meet J-1 requirements include, but are not limited to, the following:

- [https://www.isoa.org](https://www.isoa.org)
- [https://www.compassstudenthealthinsurance.com/](https://www.compassstudenthealthinsurance.com/)
- [http://www.culturalinsurance.com](http://www.culturalinsurance.com)

**Responsibilities of J-2 Visa Holders**

Please note: J-2 dependents are required to have insurance at the same standard as J-1 visa-holders.
Pre-Arrival:

- **Human Resources Forms**: Please complete and return a Standard Release Authorization, Disclosure and Acknowledgement Form, and an Education Verification Form. These forms must be accurate, complete and signed by hand. The forms need to be submitted directly to Human Resources. Human Resources will contract with a vendor to process a background check. The background vendor will determine any additional forms necessary for the specific country or countries in which a visitor has lived and will reach out directly to exchange candidates with those forms for processing. The information provided will be treated confidentially in accordance with all applicable laws.

  Exchange visitors must be sure to return any additional forms that the background check vendor sends to them directly to the background check vendor immediately as some countries can take up to a month or more to provide results.

- **Housing**: In general, exchange visitors will need to find their own housing and can use resources/lists through MICA’s Office of Residence Life (https://www.mica.edu/Campus_and_Student_Life/Residence_Life_and_Off-Campus_Housing/Off-Campus_Housing.html).

  International Education will send a **Welcome Packet** after the J-1 visa is obtained that includes information regarding MICA, culture in the USA, practical matters such as banks and phones, and staying in J-1 status while in the USA.

Post-Arrival for All Exchange Visitors:

- **MICA ID Card**: Host department will assist exchange visitor in obtaining a MICA ID upon arrival. The MICA ID cannot be issued until the Human Resources paperwork process and the background check are complete.

- **Mandatory Orientation Sessions**: International Education will arrange a mandatory orientation for the J-1 visitor. This orientation is required by J-1 visa regulations and contains information on US lifestyle and customs, community resources, emergency assistance, applicable MICA policies and procedures and International Education contacts. The host department will be responsible for orienting the exchange visitor to the MICA campus, various MICA offices and resources, and department spaces and procedures.

Post-Arrival for Exchange Visitors Hired for a Teaching Position at MICA:

- **Payroll and Tax Forms**
- **New Faculty Orientation**
- **New Employee Orientation**