The purpose of the State Department's J-1 Exchange Visitor Program is to promote cultural and educational exchange between US citizens and those of other countries. This sponsored program provides foreign nationals with opportunities to participate in exchange programs in the US and then return home to share their experiences. Technically, it’s not employment, although many J-1 scholars may be paid by the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Hosting a J-1 exchange visitor comes with some extra responsibilities for the hosting department. Make sure the inviting faculty member and your department are prepared before inviting the scholar. Responsibilities include:

1. **Understanding the application materials** and considering the appropriate J category for your scholar. We ask that departments take the necessary steps to identify their applying visitors as well. Know the person that you are inviting before extending the offer. Will they be a good fit in the lab? Have you checked references and credentials? J-1s are a sponsored visa therefore it is up to the department if they want to offer it to the prospective visitor. The departments are under no obligation to give a visa to someone unless they want to. Also be careful never to promise a visa status until you have checked with IFSS to verify what will be the appropriate status or if a J-1 is possible.

2. **Verifying English language proficiency.** J-1 scholars must have sufficient English communication skills to perform their program activities and navigate daily life in the US. There are 4 options for verifying English language proficiency during the initial request process. It is critical to understand if the scholar arrives in the U.S. and does not have the English communication skills that were represented in the application, International Faculty and Staff Services will schedule an evaluation for the scholar with an English as a Second Language (ESL) employee in the Cultural Linguistics Office. The ESL employee is a trained professional in evaluating English proficiency. If the evaluator deems the scholar is not proficient in English, the scholar’s program will be terminated.

3. **Letting IFSS know right away if the J-1 scholar is delayed** in arriving in the US. Their SEVIS record will be updated, and a new DS-2019 form will be issued reflecting their correct program dates.
4. **Letting the scholar know that he/she is required to attend an IFSS J-1 orientation.** The orientations are offered bi-monthly and are mandatory for the scholar to attend.

5. **Informing and encouraging the J-1 scholar and any J-2 dependents to purchase and maintain health insurance** for the duration of their stay in the US. If they do not, they could lose their immigration status. If the J-1 scholar qualifies for State Group Health insurance, please discuss with them the difference between single and family coverage. If the J-1 scholar has J-2 dependents or plans to bring dependents to the U.S. at a later date, the J-1 scholar must add their family members to their SGH plan.

6. **Providing cultural and educational opportunities** for the J-1 scholar and any J-2 dependents.

7. **Notify IFSS (ischolars@ohr.wisc.edu) within 24 hours of any serious problem or controversy involving the scholar.** This includes anything that could be expected to bring the Department of State, the scholar, or the UW Madison exchange visitor program into notoriety or disrepute, including conviction of a crime, potential litigation related to the J-1 program in which the scholar may be a named party, serious accident or injury, or sexual abuse allegations. If you think something has occurred that IFSS needs to be aware of, please contact even if it does not fit into the categories above.

8. **Reporting any changes in the scholar’s program**—including finances, appointment title, end date, site of activity, duties, UW - Madison department, etc.—to IFSS. Many of these need approval in advance from IFSS before they can be implemented.

9. **If the J-1 scholar is on a paid appointment with the UW, complete and update the I-9 as necessary.** Any paid employee needs to have both their identity and work authorization verified in an I-9 in the Compli-9 system. Foreign nationals who have their visa status extended must also have their I-9s re verified to show the updated work authorization documents. This will involve keeping track of all of your foreign national employee’s document expiration dates.

10. **Submitting a J-1 Ending or Shortening Program Form** to IFSS before the J-1 program ends. This form confirms either the scholar will be ending their program and leaving the U.S. on the DS2019 end date or the J-1 Scholar intends to leave their program earlier.