

Pre-Arrival Information & Orientation for J-1 Exchange Visitors



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Welcome & contact information

Welcome to Northwestern State University! We are thrilled that you chose NSULA for your J-1 Exchange Visitor Program. We hope that you find your time at NSU productive, rewarding and memorable. This packet will provide critical pre-arrival and arrival orientation information as well as immigration regulations, services at the International Student Resource Center (ISRC), and an overview of NSULA. The International Student Resource Center (ISRC) is here to assist you both before and during your stay in the United States. We look forward to meeting you at the *mandatory* orientation program. Your hosting department will also have valuable information and resources available to you during your stay.

The pre-arrival and orientation information is meant to assist you as you prepare for your journey to the United States, and for your easy adjustment into your stay in the United States as a student or scholar at Northwestern State University. You will find answers to many of your potential questions in this guide. However, if you do not find answers to your questions in this guide, please contact us by email at: international@nsula.edu

CONTACT INFORMATION

International Student Resource Center
125 Central Avenue, Natchitoches, LA 71497
Telephone (318) 357-5939; Fax (318) 357-5955
www.nsula.edu/international

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Director, IRSC
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Exchange Visitor Program Brochure:

<http://i1visa.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Brochure-The-Exchange-Visitor-Program.pdf>

Exchange Visitor Program Services

Bureau of Educational & Cultural Affairs
Department of State
State Annex SA-5, Fifth Floor
Washington, DC 20522-0505

Responsible Agency

Administration and regulation of the Exchange Visitor Program is through the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs under the United States Department of State. The Immigration and Naturalization Service ensures compliance of both sponsors and participants in the Exchange Visitor Program through the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS), which is described below. The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Academic and Government Programs Division is located at 2200 C Street NW, Washington, DC 20522-0582. Their website address is <http://i1visa.state.gov/>.

Sponsor

Exchange Visitor Program Sponsor: Northwestern State University
Responsible Officer: Telba Espinoza-Contreras/Director of the International Student Resource Center
Alternate Responsible Officer: Andrea Maley/ Director of Admissions
Address: 175 Sam Sibley Dr, Natchitoches, LA 71497
Phone: 318.357.6011, Toll Free: 800.327.1903
E-mail: international@nsula.edu, Website: www.nsula.edu

Pre-Arrival Checklist

Before arriving, you must:

- Verify that all the information on your DS-2019 is correct. Note the program begin date and notify the ISRC immediately if your travel plans change, including if you face delays in getting your visa.
- Pay the SEVIS FEE online at www.fmjfee.com/i901fee
- Locate your local U.S. consulate; schedule an appointment for a visa interview: <http://www.usembassy.gov/>
- Apply for a J-1 Visa at the nearest U.S. Consulate or Embassy to your home residence. (**Note:** Canadian citizens do not need a US Visa, but must pay the SEVIS fee).
- Make financial arrangements to pay for tuition (if applicable) and other bills.
- Secure housing. Although ISRC will assist you in finding housing opportunities, the ISRC is not responsible for securing housing for J-1 Exchange Visitors. This guide provides an overview of the different housing choices in Natchitoches.
- Schedule your mandatory J-1 Scholar Orientation with ISRC for a date shortly after your arrival in Natchitoches. Appointments can be made at: international@nsula.edu
- Purchase or make plans for required medical insurance coverage. The U.S. Department of State requires all individuals who enter the United States in J-1 status to have medical insurance for themselves and any accompanying J-2 dependents.
- Collect and organize immigration documents and put in your carry-on (hand) luggage
 - Valid Passport with Visa
 - DS-2019
 - I-901 SEVIS Fee receipt
 - Financial Support Document
- Arrange travel to United States. Plan to arrive at least one week before the first day of orientation.
- Make travel plans to allow sufficient time to familiarize yourself with the university. Attendance at new Exchange Visitor orientation is mandatory. Keep this in mind when booking your flight. J-1 exchange visitors may arrive no more than 30 days before the program start date listed on the DS-2019.
- Arrange or make plans for transportation from airport to your hotel or apartment. The ISRC will provide transportation only for the first arrival into the Alexandria or Shreveport Regional Airport, but you must notify the ISRC if such service is needed. If you arrive at any other nearby airport, you must make the necessary arrangements to travel to Natchitoches.

WHAT ELSE TO BRING

Important Numbers and Addresses

- Your address in your home country and phone number(s) to call in case of emergency.
- Your U.S. address and/or phone number, if already available.
- Host Department phone number, address, and contact person.
- Office of International Student Resource Center.

Personal Items: What You Should Bring to the U.S.:

- Any prescription medications.
- Your medical history with English translation.

J-1 Exchange Visitor Program Purpose

The J-1 Exchange Visitor Program is a Federal program administered by the Department of State which fosters the mutual exchange of ideas between Americans and foreign nationals by means of educational and cultural exchanges, and to stimulate international collaborative teaching, studying, and research efforts. 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 Exchange Visitor Program promotes international interchange, mutual enrichment and linkages between research and educational institutions in the United States and those of other countries. The J-1 Exchange Visitor Program is organized into a number of different categories. Northwestern State University, through the International Student Resource Center (ISRC) has been designated to sponsor the following categories: student, professor, research scholar and short-term scholar.

The J-1 exchange visitor visa is a nonimmigrant visa, and participants in the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program are expected to return to their home countries when they complete their programs. Entry into the United States as a participant in the Exchange Visitor Program is granted with the understanding that participants will complete the objectives of a single program category. The minimum duration of any exchange program is three weeks, except for participants in the Short Term Scholar category or those sponsored by the Federal Government. The maximum duration varies by category. You may refer to the U.S. State Department's Exchange Visitor Program's brochure in PDF format at http://www.fgcu.edu/International/Information/DOS_Exchange_Visitor_Program_Welcome_Brochure.pdf

AS A J-1 EXCHANGE VISITOR YOU MUST UNDERSTAND ...

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 International Student Resource Center.

The J-1 Exchange Visitor Program is "category" specific. You are entering the U.S. in the Student, Professor, Research Scholar or Short-term Scholar category. You are not eligible to change the purpose of your visit or your category once you have entered the U.S. Each category has specific time limits, please read carefully the section about time limits.

You may be subject to the 2-year home residency requirement. Whether or not you are subject is determined at the U.S.

You are required to maintain health insurance for the entire duration of your DS-2019. This also applies to your 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 to be 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.

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).

Key terms

Sponsors

The U.S. Department of State designates sponsors to administer individual Exchange Visitor programs. Sponsors are U.S. organizations such as government agencies, academic institutions, educational and cultural organizations, and corporations. They screen and select Exchange Visitors participating in their programs, provide them with pre-arrival information and an orientation, and monitor their activities. Sponsors offer Exchange Visitors cross-cultural activities that will expose them to American society, culture, and institutions. Exchange Visitors are encouraged to participate in activities that provide them with an opportunity to share their language, culture, and history with others.

Exchange Visitors

An Exchange Visitor is a foreign national selected by a sponsor to participate in an exchange program, and is issued a DS-2019 to apply for a J-1 visa. An accompanying spouse and any unmarried children under 21 years of age may apply for J-2 visas, with the permission of your sponsor.

Responsible Officers

Sponsors appoint individuals as Responsible Officers and Alternate Responsible Officers to advise and assist Exchange Visitors. These officers have authority to issue the Certificate of Eligibility (DS-2019) to Exchange Visitors and communicate with the Department of State and the Department of Homeland Security on your behalf.

Rules and Regulations

You must understand and abide by the Exchange Visitor Program regulations, U.S. laws, and sponsor rules. Regular contact with your Responsible Officer will help you keep current of any changes, which may affect your J status.

Activities & Program Provisions

You will enter the United States in one program category and will be required to engage in that category and subject/field of activity listed on your DS-2019. You must comply with the specific program provisions of the regulations relating to your program category.

Maintenance of Status

You are required to have a valid and unexpired DS-2019. Sponsors may terminate an Exchange Visitor's program for violating U.S. laws, Exchange Visitor Program regulations, or the sponsor's rules governing their particular program.

Notification

You must inform your Responsible Officer if you change your address or telephone number, or complete or withdraw from your program early. Doing so assists your sponsor in reporting current information to the U.S. Department of State.

Program descriptions¹

The following information is provided by the U.S. Department of State. We include it in this guide according to the Department of State's requirements for J-1 Program Sponsors.

The U.S. Department of State administers the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, as amended. The Act promotes mutual understanding between the people of the United States and other countries by means of educational and cultural exchange. The Exchange Visitor Program provides foreign nationals with opportunities to participate in exchange programs in the United States and then return home to share their experiences.

Northwestern State University is authorized by the U.S. Department of State to bring J-1 Exchange Visitors in the following four categories: Professor, Research Scholar, Short-term Scholar, and Students. The following rules governing these categories should be given consideration prior to participation:

College and University Student

For full course of study at an accredited institution. Duration of stay is limited to the length of the program of study. Foreign students have the opportunity to study at American degree-granting post-secondary accredited academic institutions, or participate in a student internship program that will fulfill the educational objectives of the student's degree program in his or her home country.

College/University Students must:

- Be financed directly or indirectly by the U.S. government, the government of their home country, an international organization of which the United States is a member by treaty or statute, or supported substantially by funding from any source other than personal or family funds;
- Be carried out according to an agreement between the U.S. government and a foreign government, or according to a written agreement between American and foreign educational institutions, an American educational institution and a foreign government or a state or local government in the United States and a foreign government; or Student is participating in a student internship program that will fulfill the educational objectives for the student's degree program in his or her home country; or
- Pursue a non-degree program, and must be enrolled full-time in a prescribed course of study. The maximum duration of a non-degree program is 24 months inclusive of academic training.

Professor and Research Scholar

Minimum of Master's degree with appropriate experience in the field is required. Minimum duration is 3 weeks; maximum is 5 years. The exchange of professors and research scholars promotes the exchange of ideas, research, mutual enrichment and linkages between research and academic institutions in the United States and foreign countries.

The professor category is for a foreign national who enters the United State for the primary purpose of teaching, lecturing, observing or consulting at accredited post-secondary academic institutions, museums, libraries or similar types of institutions. A professor may also conduct research, unless disallowed by the sponsoring organization.

The Research Scholar is for a foreign national who enters the United States for the primary purpose of conducting research, observing or consulting in connection with research projects at research institutions, corporate research facilities, museums, libraries, post-secondary accredited academic institutions, or similar types of institutions. A research scholar may also teach or lecture, unless disallowed by the sponsor.

¹ Program descriptions from: <http://j1visa.state.gov/programs>

The research scholar or professor's appointment to a position shall be temporary, even if the position itself is permanent.

Incidental lectures or short-term consultations are permitted with the approval of the responsible officer so long as they are directly related to the objectives of the participant's program, and do not delay the exchange program's completion date.

Professor and Research Scholars must:

- Not be a candidate for a tenure track position;
- Not have participated in and completed a professor or research scholar program within the last 24 months preceding the beginning date of their new program's commencement;
- Not have participated in a J-Visa program for all or part of the 12-month period immediately preceding the start date of a professor or research scholar program unless they meet one of the following exceptions:
 - The participant is currently in a professor or research scholar program and is transferring to another institution in the United States to continue their current J-1 program;
 - The participant's prior physical presence in the U.S. on a J-visa program was less than six months in duration; and
 - The prior participation was as a short-term scholar.

Short-Term Scholar

Professors, research scholars and other individuals with similar education or accomplishments travel to the United States on a short-term visit to lecture, observe, consult, train or demonstrate special skills at research institutions, museums, libraries, post-secondary accredited academic institutions or similar types of institutions. Participants collaborate on special research projects, teach a semester at a college or university, or lecture, consult or observe in a variety of settings in education and research in the United States.

Minimum duration is 1 day; maximum is 6 months. No extension or change of category is possible.

Short-Term Scholars must: Be a professor or research scholar or someone with similar education and or experience.

J-1 Categories and Maximum Lengths of Stay

Maximum Stay

The category indicated in item 4 of your DS-2019 determines your maximum period of stay under your J-1 program. See the second page of the DS-2019, 1(c) "Limitations of Stay." Upon completion of your J-1 program, you are afforded a 30-day grace period to prepare for departure from the United States. You should not work or engage in other program activities during this period.

- 1) **Professor and Research Scholar:** maximum length of stay is 5 years, including any previous continuous time spent at other institutions. Once the scholar completes the J-1 program, regardless of her/his length of stay, the scholar may not obtain another J-1 Professor or Research Scholar category status for two years (refer to the two-year (24-month) bar on repeat participation).
- 2) **Short-Term Scholar:** maximum length of stay is 6 months, including any previous continuous time spent at other institutions.

Bar on Repeat Participation for J-1 Professor and Research Scholars

The "Bars" refer to the amount of time an Exchange Visitor must wait to start a new program after completing a prior J Exchange Visitor program as a **Research Scholar or Professor**. There are two types of bars:

12-Month Bar

USCIS regulation 22 CFR 62.20(d)(ii) established a “12-month bar” on beginning a new J-1 program as a Research Scholar or Professor for those persons who spent the previous year in the United States in any J status (J-1 or J-2). This bar does not apply to transfers from one institution to another, to persons who were Short-Term Scholars, or to persons whose J program lasted less than six months.

24-Month Bar

USCIS regulation 22 CFR 62.20(i)(2) established a “24-month bar” on repeat participation as a Research Scholar or Professor for those persons who were present in the United States in J-1 Research Scholar/Professor Category on or after November 17, 2006. This means that all J-1 Professors or Research Scholars (not those in the Short-term Scholar category) will be barred from participation in the same category for two years from the end date of their programs. For example, a professor whose J-1 program is from September 1, 2008 - May 31, 2009, will not be able to return to the US as a J-1 Professor (or Research Scholar) until May 31, 2011.

The bar does not apply to transfers from one institution to another. These bars only prevent new programs as Research Scholars and Professors who have previously held J status. They do not prevent someone who has held J status from beginning a new program as a J-1 Student or Short-Term Scholar. Once the applicable 12-month or 24-month time period has lapsed, Exchange Visitors are again eligible to begin a program in any J category.

Two-Year Home Residence Requirement 212(e)

What is the 212(e) two-year home country physical presence requirement?

The 2-year home residency requirement called 212(e) applies to certain J-1 exchange visitors. If you are subject to the 212(e), the requirement should be noted on your visa or at the bottom of your DS-2019. You will be required to return to your home country at the end of your exchange visitor program and be physically present there for an aggregate of two years before being eligible to return to the United States in immigrant status (permanent resident/green card), H status (temporary workers and dependents), K (fiancé), or L status (intra-company transferees and dependents). Exchange Visitors subject to the two-year home country residence requirement are not eligible to change their nonimmigrant status in the U.S. from J to permanent residence or to any other nonimmigrant category except A (diplomatic) and G (international organization).

This requirement is different from the 12-month and 24-month repeat participation bars. Please read and understand section 1(a) on the second page of the enclosed DS-2019. This requirement is normally associated with government funding (from your country or the United States) and/or the U.S. Department of State skills list. To see if your country and skill results in this requirement, please check the skills list at: www.travel.state.gov/content/visas/en/study-exchange/exchange/exchange-visitor-skills-list.html

How Do I Know If I Am Subject to the Two-Year Requirement?

Please note that only the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs can determine with certainty whether or not you are subject to the requirement. Many exchange visitors are under the impression that this is decided when a consular officer stamps the visa or eligibility document (DS-2019) with a statement that the visitor is not subject to the requirement. However, this is only a preliminary determination by the consular officer. You may write to the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs to request an “advisory opinion” on whether or not you are subject to the requirement if you are uncertain about your status.

Note: Former Exchange Visitors are eligible to return home and obtain a visa for all other nonimmigrant visa types, even if subject to the two-year residence requirement. Only lawful permanent residence, and H, K, and L visas, are prohibited. Exchange Visitors subject to the two-year residence requirement are eligible to leave the U.S. and apply for visas to return as tourists or F-1 students as long as they are otherwise eligible for those

visas. The two-year home residence requirement should NOT be confused with the 24-month bar on repeat participation.

What are the 212(e) conditions?

Two-year Home-country Physical Presence Requirement Conditions - An exchange visitor is subject to the two-year home country physical presence requirement if the following conditions exist:

- Government funded exchange program - The program in which the exchange visitor was participating was financed in whole or in part directly or indirectly by the U.S. government or the government of the exchange visitor's nationality or last residence;
- Graduate medical education or training - The exchange visitor entered the U.S. to receive graduate medical education or training;
- Specialized knowledge or skill: Skills List - The exchange visitor is a national or permanent resident of a country which has deemed the field of specialized knowledge or skill necessary to the development of the country, as shown on the Exchange Visitor Skills List. Review the Exchange Visitor Skills List 2009 found at <https://travel.state.gov/content/visas/en/study-exchange/exchange/exchange-visitor-skills-list.html>

Note: *If you are not subject to the 212(e) Two -Year Home Residence Requirement, you may be subject to the 24-month bar after completing a J-1 program as a Research Scholar or Professor.*

Frequently Asked Questions

1. May I extend or transfer my program if I am subject to the 212(e) rule?
 - Persons with a two-year residence requirement are eligible for program transfers and extension of their J status up to the limits of time for their particular Exchange Visitor category.
2. I have J-2 dependents traveling with me. Are they subject to the 212(e) rule also?
 - If the principal J-1 Exchange Visitor is subject to the two-year residence requirement, dependents in J-2 status are subject as well.
3. Are my J-2 dependents required to live with me?
 - Yes.
4. May a waiver of the 212(e) rule be requested? How so?
 - An Exchange Visitor may request that the two-year home residence requirement be waived only on the following grounds:
 - Statement from the Exchange Visitor's home country that it has no objection to the waiver.
 - Request for waiver made by an interested U.S. government agency.
 - Interest of a state agency (only for alien physicians).
 - Exceptional hardship to the U.S. citizen or permanent resident spouse or child of the Exchange Visitor.
 - Fear of persecution on account of race, religion, or political opinion.

Applying for a J-1/J-2 Visa

A valid J-1 visa is required for entry to the United States on the Exchange Visitor Program. Visa procedures vary slightly from one U.S. embassy or consulate to another. Before you apply for your visa, check with the U.S. embassy or consulate where you plan to apply to learn about their specific procedures and policies regarding J-1 visa applications as well as to determine exactly what supporting documentation is required. For information on processing times and procedures, visit the U.S. Department of State at <https://travel.state.gov/content/visas/en/study-exchange/exchange.html>

NOTE: A personal interview is required, which needs to be arranged in advance, so you will need to schedule your appointment as soon as possible. Be aware that there could also be substantial delays due to security checks, so please plan your travel arrangements accordingly.

Steps to apply for a J-1 visa:

1. Read your DS-2019 carefully to ensure the information is correct.
2. Obtain a passport if you don't have one. Make sure it is valid 6 months into the future after the date of your arrival.
3. Pay SEVIS fee (\$200) with Form I-901. <https://www.fmjfee.com/i901fee/>
4. Apply for the J-1 visa with the nearest U.S. Consulate/Embassy.
5. Review the health insurance requirements for you and dependents that are traveling to the U.S.

J-2 Dependent Family Members

Spouses and unmarried children under 21 may apply for J-2 visas to accompany J-1 scholars to the U.S. All requests for J-2 visa sponsorship for dependents must come from your sponsoring department. If you have already requested J-2 visa sponsorship for a dependent, then her/his DS-2019 form is included with your packet. You must be able to show an additional funds of \$650/month plus health insurance (or funds for it) for a spouse and \$300/month plus health insurance (or funds for it) for a child. Once in the U.S., eligible individuals in J-2 status are permitted to apply for work permission from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Work permission takes approximately 2-3 months to obtain, and it requires a fee to USCIS.

- TOURIST VISA (B-2) OR VISA WAIVER PROGRAM FOR FAMILY MEMBERS - The B-2 visa currently allows a visit of up to 6 months. The Visa Waiver Program (WVP) allows a maximum visit of 90 days. If your dependent has no plans to work, the B-2 or the Visa Waiver Program is a fine option for visiting you in the U.S. (To determine eligibility for the WVP, visit http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/without/without_1990.html).

The following is generally required for the consular J-1/J-2 visa application:

- Signed DS-2019(s) – A separate DS-2019 form is required for each visa applicant. Each J visa applicant should sign his/her own DS-2019, with the exception of children under age 14 (the J-1 parent should sign in this instance). The DS-2019(s) will be returned to you to present at the U.S. port of entry. Check your documents; make sure you check the form DS-2019 carefully to ensure the information is correct. If you believe there is an error, please contact the ISRC directly (international@nsula.edu).
- Receipt showing **payment of the \$200 SEVIS fee (J-1 only)**. Make sure to print the confirmation of payment of this fee; you will need this for your visa application. For more information and how to pay, please visit: <https://www.fmjfee.com/i901fee/>. The fee is non-refundable, even if the visa application is

denied. **Important:** If you do not pay the SEVIS I-901 fee, then your visa application will be denied by the U.S. Department of State.

- Payment of the visa application fee, and appropriate visa application forms (see www.usembassy.gov), for each visa applicant. ***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 the entire family.
- Passport(s) valid for at least 6 months into the future, for each visa applicant.
- Proof of ties to your home country -Consult the website of your local U.S. Consulate/Embassy for suggestions.
- Proof of financial support - You must be able to verify the total funds indicated on the DS-2019 with a personal bank statement and/or a sponsor's official statement of support. If you are receiving payment from NSULA, you may request a letter from the inviting department that specifies your position and salary.
- Two U.S. Passport-size Photos (often required – check with U.S. Consulate), for each visa applicant.
- J-1 Invitation letter from the sponsoring department at Northwestern State University (recommended).
- Evidence of J-2 relationship to the J-1 applicant (e.g. marriage or birth certificate).

If your visa is granted, the consular officer will place a visa stamp in your passport. If you receive a multiple-entry visa, you may use it to re-enter the United States as often as you like up to the date of its expiration as long as you have a valid DS-2019 Form.

Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) FEE

The Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) is a U.S. government database designed to monitor the arrival, continuing status, and departure of F, J, and M visa holders. All U.S. educational institutions sponsoring international students and scholars are required by law to be enrolled in SEVIS. The database contains records of all J-1 scholars and J-2 family members. SEVIS is available to the Department of Homeland Security as well as to U.S. embassies and consular posts worldwide, and is used to determine a J-1 or J-2 exchange visitor's eligibility to enter the U.S. or to obtain immigration benefits such as work permission, extensions, and transfers, while in the U.S. The current fee for exchange visitors (J-1) is \$200.

Who Must Pay the SEVIS Fee?

1. Students & Scholars seeking an F-1 or J-1 visa from a U.S. consulate abroad for initial attendance at a U.S. school.
2. Students seeking a J-1 visa from a U.S. consulate abroad to commence participation in a J-1 Exchange Visitor Program.
3. Persons applying for a change of status to F-1 or J-1.
4. Canadian nationals are *exempt from the J-1 Visa requirement. However, they must pay the \$200 SEVIS fee before going to the U.S. port of entry. The fee CANNOT be paid at the port of entry.*
5. J-1 students applying for a change of program category within the U.S.
6. J-1 students transferring from fee-exempt Federal Government sponsored programs (such as Fulbright) to other J-1 programs.
7. J-1 students transferring from reduced-fee J-1 programs to full-fee J-1 programs.
8. J-1 students applying for reinstatement.

Who Does Not Pay the SEVIS Fee?

1. J-2 dependents
2. J-1 students and J-1 scholars who are seeking an extension or transfer
3. J-1 students and J-1 scholars who have previously paid the fee and are applying for a visa to return to the U.S. as continuing students in the same course of study
4. J-1 students and J-1 scholars who have paid the fee but have been denied a visa who are reapplying for the same visa within 12 months
5. Persons who have paid the SEVIS fee but have been denied a change of status to J-1 and who are reapplying for the same status within 12 months after being granted a motion to reopen the case
6. J-1 participants in fee-exempt Federal Government-sponsored programs (such as Fulbright)

You must have a DHS fee receipt before applying for a visa or change of status. Third parties may pay the fee on behalf of the student or scholar.

To Pay Online:

- Complete form I-901 online at www.fmjfee.com. Be sure to write your name and other information exactly as it appears on your DS-2019 form.
- Pay the fee using Visa, MasterCard or American Express.
- Print a copy of the online receipt. You cannot return to the screen that asks you if you would like to print a receipt so it is important to print the receipt as soon as possible.
- Make a copy of your receipt, and keep it with your other important immigration documents, including the second receipt of the I-901 that you will receive in the mail.

To insure that your record in SEVIS is accurate and up to date please be sure to:

- Report with International Student Resource Center within 10 days of arrival.
- Provide a local U.S. address and phone number, even if only temporary (J-1 federal regulations require the International Student Resource Center to report the arrival of exchange visitors in SEVIS within 30 days of the begin date on the DS-2019 form).
- Notify the International Student Resource Center of any local address change within 10 days of moving;
- Inform the International Student Resource Center of your departure from NSU should you leave earlier than 30 days from the end date of your DS-2019 form.

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 ISRC check-in appointment. The health insurance plan must cover all participants for accidents, sickness, medical evacuation and repatriation. The regulations currently require the following:

YOUR INSURANCE MUST MEET THE FOLLOWING REQUIREMENTS:

COVERAGE	REQUIREMENT
Medical Benefits	\$100,000
Medical Evacuation	\$50,000
Repatriation of Remains	\$25,000
Deductible per accident or illness	\$500

To assist you in obtaining the required medical, evacuation, and repatriation insurance coverage as mentioned above, you may review the list provided by NAFSA Association of International Educators, of recommended companies that provide health insurance: <https://www.nafsa.org/findresources/Default.aspx?id=8823>

These are others providers: www.isoa.org, <http://www.hccmis.com/index.php> that offer health insurance. Health insurance costs vary based on age, healthcare needs and number of persons covered. Another option to purchase insurance is through International Student Insurance: <http://www.internationalstudentinsurance.com/travel-medical-insurance/>

J-1 Full-time NSU Employees

Exchange Visitors who will be employed full-time and paid by the University, may enroll in the university medical insurance plan through Blue Cross Blue Shield of Louisiana. Human Resources will go over these plans with you and help you select the best plan for you.

NSU's Employee health insurance plans meet all federal requirements except payment for repatriation and medical evacuation. Therefore, all J-1 exchange visitors and J-2 dependents with NSU Employee health insurance must purchase a supplemental policy that will bring their full health coverage up to minimum federal requirements.

Dependent Insurance for J-1 Employed Full Time by NSU

All dependents of exchange visitor's must be insured throughout the entire program of the Exchange visitor. If the program is longer than one semester, insurance must be purchased at least until the end of the academic semester and renewed prior to the expiration date.

If the J-1 is a paid university employee, the Exchange Visitor may pay to have the J-2 added to their employee insurance. If the J-1 is not a paid university employee the EV is responsible for purchasing the J-2 health insurance.

NOTES:

- It is recommended that all scholars and their dependents purchase health insurance coverage before traveling to the United States.
- It is recommended that your health insurance coverage is active prior to traveling.
- Not all providers offer insurance coverage for pregnancy and maternity. For those that do, the pregnancy cannot be a pre-existing condition at the time of application.
- In addition, not all plans cover dependents, and in some cases, the J-1 must be enrolled in the health insurance plan for the J-2 to be eligible.

Please note that failure to maintain adequate health insurance for the principal and dependents 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.

Important Medical Terms

When determining which insurance plan to purchase, here are a few important terms to understand:

1. HMO: A “Health Maintenance Organization” functions as your health care network. If your insurance is an HMO, you will need to go to a certain network of doctors, hospitals, pharmacies, specialists, etc. to have your expenses covered by your insurance (this is called “in- network”)
2. In-network vs. Out of Network Providers: In- network care is significantly cheaper than out of network care. Insurance companies have negotiated prices with health care providers that are in their network. If you must use an out of network doctor or provider, note the different deductible, out of pocket maximums, and costs for services.
3. Deductible: A deductible is the amount you must pay for your health care before your insurance provide begins to pay.
4. Co-Pay(ment): Amount you are responsible for every time you get medical care. Note that this cost may vary depending on the type of doctor.
5. Primary Care Provider: Some insurance plans require you to select a primary care provider (doctor) that will be the main health care provider. PCP’s normally have a lower co-pay and will write referrals if you need care not provided in their practice.

To learn more about deductibles and other important terms, visit:

www.dol.gov/ebsa/pdf/SBCUniformGlossary.pdf

Have a safe trip and we look forward to meeting you upon your arrival!

Entering The United States

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 NSU and the International Student Resource Center of your expected arrival date.

ENTERING THE UNITED STATES

Once you have obtained the J-1 visa, you will be able to enter the United States in J-1 status. As you arrive in the U.S., you will present the following documents to the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Officer at the U.S. port of entry:

- Passport(s) containing a valid J-1 visa (or J-2 visas for accompanying family members).
- Signed DS-2019(s) for you and any accompanying family members.
- Recommended: Proof of financial support (same as the document presented at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate) and invitation letter from the sponsoring department at Northwestern State University.

Important! Please put all these documents (passport and DS-2019) in your carry-on luggage, not your checked suitcase. Also, we recommend that you make copies of all of these documents and place the copies in your checked luggage.

The officer should return the following:

- Passport(s) with entry stamp: Please check that the entry stamp has the notation “J-1 D/S” or “J-2 D/S” (D/S stands for “duration of status”). If you notice a discrepancy, please be sure to address it with the CBP officer immediately as it may be difficult to correct later.
- Stamped DS-2019s for you and any accompanying family members.
- Any of the recommended documents that you provided.

Money

- Amount brought with you should be enough to cover at least one month’s expenses, as well as any necessary items such as cellular phone, etc.
- You can bring the money in the form of/via:
 - o Cash
 - o Wire transfer
 - o Traveler's checks
 - o Credit card(s) accepted in the U.S.

I-94 RECORDS

Under the current system, your I-94 entry record will be available to you by accessing the following website online: www.cbp.gov/i94. Occasionally, a paper I-94 is issued at the U.S. Port of Entry. You will use your passport information to look up the I-94 record. The record should have the date of your recent arrival. The record should indicate “J-1 D/S” or “J-2 D/S”

CANADIAN NATIONALS

Canadian nationals are not required to obtain a visa stamp from the U.S. Embassy or Consulate. However, they must present the enclosed DS-2019, SEVIS fee receipt, and a Canadian passport at the U.S. port of entry in order to be admitted in J-1 status for D/S (duration of stay). If you are a Canadian Landed Immigrant, please check with the nearest U.S. Consulate about whether or not you require a J-1 visa stamp, as requirements vary depending on country of citizenship.

Arrival Information

Airport Pickup Services

The International Student Resource Center will provide transportation from the Alexandria International Airport (AEX) and the Shreveport Regional Airport to the city of Natchitoches. To schedule a pick up appointment, please send an e-mail to international@nsula.edu

Arrival Checklist

- ___ **Attend J-1 Mandatory Orientation at ISRC.** Once you have completed the mandatory orientation, your SEVIS record will be validated within three days.
- ___ **Schedule an appointment to purchase insurance.** In case you have not purchased insurance coverage for yourself and your J-2 dependents, please schedule an appointment.
- ___ **J-1 students.** Register for classes if you have not been able to do so prior to your arrival.
- ___ **Get your NSULA Campus Wide ID card.** This is your campus identification card.
- ___ **Report your local U.S. address.** Address changes must be reported within 10 days of any move.
- ___ **Make banking arrangements.** Exchange Visitors are eligible to create a bank account even without a social security number at MidSouth Bank. Several other options for banking are also available if you have a social security number.
- ___ **Apply for a Social Security Number (SSN).** An SSN is required if you are paid by NSU.

Arrival Notification

In order for NSULA to validate your arrival in the SEVIS database, you must register in person at the International Student Resource Center immediately upon your arrival at NSU. We must also enter your local U.S. address (even if it is temporary) in SEVIS at that time. Please bring your immigration documents with you when you come to the International Student Resource Center to check in. Inform your inviting department that you have arrived safely. Attend the mandatory J-1 Exchange Visitor Orientation.

Mandatory J-1 Exchange Visitor Orientation

OVERVIEW

We recommend that you arrive a week before the start of the Orientation Program in order to find housing and become acquainted with Natchitoches. The U.S. Department of State requires us, as your program sponsor, to provide you with an orientation program. After you attend the orientation, The International Student Resource Center will validate your arrival in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) database. This validation notifies the Department of Homeland Security that you have arrived and begun your J-1 exchange visitor program and changes your SEVIS record to “ACTIVE” status.

IMPORTANT: *Orientation is mandatory and a part of your J-1 visa requirement. Failure to attend orientation and have your SEVIS record validated may result in future immigration complications as well as problems obtaining a Social Security Number.*

Your J-2 dependent family members are welcome to attend the orientation with you if space permits; however, the J-1 Visitor is the only one who is required to attend. If your family members do not accompany you to orientation, please remember to bring their documents and insurance for verification.

DAYS AND TIME

Please attend the J-1 Exchange Visitor Orientation as soon as possible after you arrive in Natchitoches. Orientation sessions are held Mondays and Wednesdays at 2:00 pm and typically last about one hour. We conduct orientation in a group setting, so please be on time for your appointment and have all of your documents with you (noted in the next section). If you arrive after orientation has started, you will be asked to reschedule for another session.

WHAT TO BRING

You will need to bring the following documents to your orientation session for you and any accompanying J-2 dependents:

- Passport(s)
- I-94 Arrival/Departure Record records(s)
- DS-2019(s)
- Proof of insurance
- Local U.S. Address
- Emergency Contact information
- Local Natchitoches phone number or the number of your hosting department at Northwestern State University.

TOPICS COVERED AT ORIENTATION

- Immigration status
- Medical and evacuation/repatriation insurance, and University Health Services
- Employment
- Finance and banking concerns
- Obtaining a Louisiana Driver's License, University Identification card, and U.S. Social Security Number
- Intercultural and family programs
- Local transportation and shopping options to consider
- Services provided by the ISRC

Maintaining your J-1 status

Please note that it is your responsibility to maintain your immigration status. The points below are a summary of the regulations. It is strongly advised to read this packet thorough.

In order to maintain your J-1 status, you must:

- **Attend full J-1 program, including J-1 Exchange Visitor Orientation.**
- **Keep immigration documents current.**
 - Passport must remain valid throughout entire stay in US.
 - DS-2019 may not expire.
- **Report local address to program sponsor-International Student Resource Center.**
 - You are required by immigration regulations to maintain your local address with Northwestern State University at all times. Immigration regulations require a physical address rather than a P.O. Box or an office address.
- **Maintain adequate medical, evacuation, and repatriation insurance.**
 - You must maintain adequate insurance for yourself and your J-2 dependents for the entire duration of your program and provide proof of coverage if you waive university insurance (if applicable).
- **Engage in authorized employment only.**

- **Engage only in activities that are appropriate for your J category.**
- **Report any early departure from your program to the ISRC.**
 - If you decide to depart the United States more than 30 days prior to the completion date of your program (as indicated on your DS-2019) you must notify ISRC.

Change of Status

Situations may arise throughout your time at Northwestern State University that require a change of status. Consult your International Advisor as soon as possible to understand all your options and to provide with enough processing time. An application for a change to another nonimmigrant status will require a minimum of three to six months for processing by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Individual circumstances may influence procedures and processing times, so it is important to discuss such plans with your International Advisor in detail as early as possible. Please note that if you are subject to the 212(e) two-year home residence requirement, you will not be eligible for a change of status from within the United States.

Extension of Stay

It is your responsibility to be aware of the expiration date of your DS-2019, which indicates the period of authorized stay in the United States. If you need additional time to complete your program objective, a J-1 Extension must be requested through ISRC prior to the expiration date on your DS-2019.

Scholars must make an advising appointment and present the following to the International Advisor:

- A letter written by your hosting department that requests an extension, including:
 - Dates of the extension,
 - Salary (if any) and,
 - Verification of insurance benefits (if applicable).
- Verification of funding.
- Verification of insurance that meets the requirements of the U.S. Department of State for yourself and any dependents in J-2 status.

Extending your DS-2019 extends your J-1 immigration status, but does not extend the visa stamp in your passport. If your current visa has expired and you travel outside of the United States during the extended period, you must apply for a new visa stamp to return to the United States.

Transfers

Transfers from one J-1 program to another must be initiated with the current program sponsor listed on your DS-2019. Students should complete the SEVIS Transfer Release Form. Scholars should contact the ISRC as early as possible to determine transfer eligibility and procedures.

Change of Program Category

J-1 Exchange Visitors may rarely change from one J category to another. Please contact the ISRC as early as possible to determine eligibility and procedures.

30-Day Grace Period

Upon completion of your program, you and your J-2 dependents are allowed a 30-day grace period to depart the United States. It is critical that you depart the United States on time, prior to the end of your grace period.

You are not authorized to work during the grace period, nor can you leave the United States and return during this time. Whether you extend your status at NSULA or transfer to another institution, you DO NOT need to pay the SEVIS fee again.

About Northwestern State University



Three Columns

History

Northwestern was established in 1884 in the old Bullard Mansion atop a hill overlooking the bustling river port city of Natchitoches. The campus grew as the school expanded from a two-year degree for teachers at Louisiana State Normal School to the four-year education degree at Louisiana Normal College in 1921. In 1944, the school became

Vic the Demon

On September 22, 1984, the Demon received his official name by a contest sponsored by the Athletic Department; the contest was open to faculty, staff, and students. Ray Carney, an alum of the University, was the official winner with “Vic” which is short for “Victory”.

NSU Campus Map

Below you will find the campus map, as well as instructions to download the mobile app to bring the NSU Campus Buildings life. To view an online interactive NSU campus map you can also visit: <http://nsula.hostexp.com/>

Northwestern State College and in 1970 it grew into Northwestern State University. Today, over 125 years later, three columns remain of the original structure on what is now called Normal Hill. The campus expanded to the south and west as the school grew.

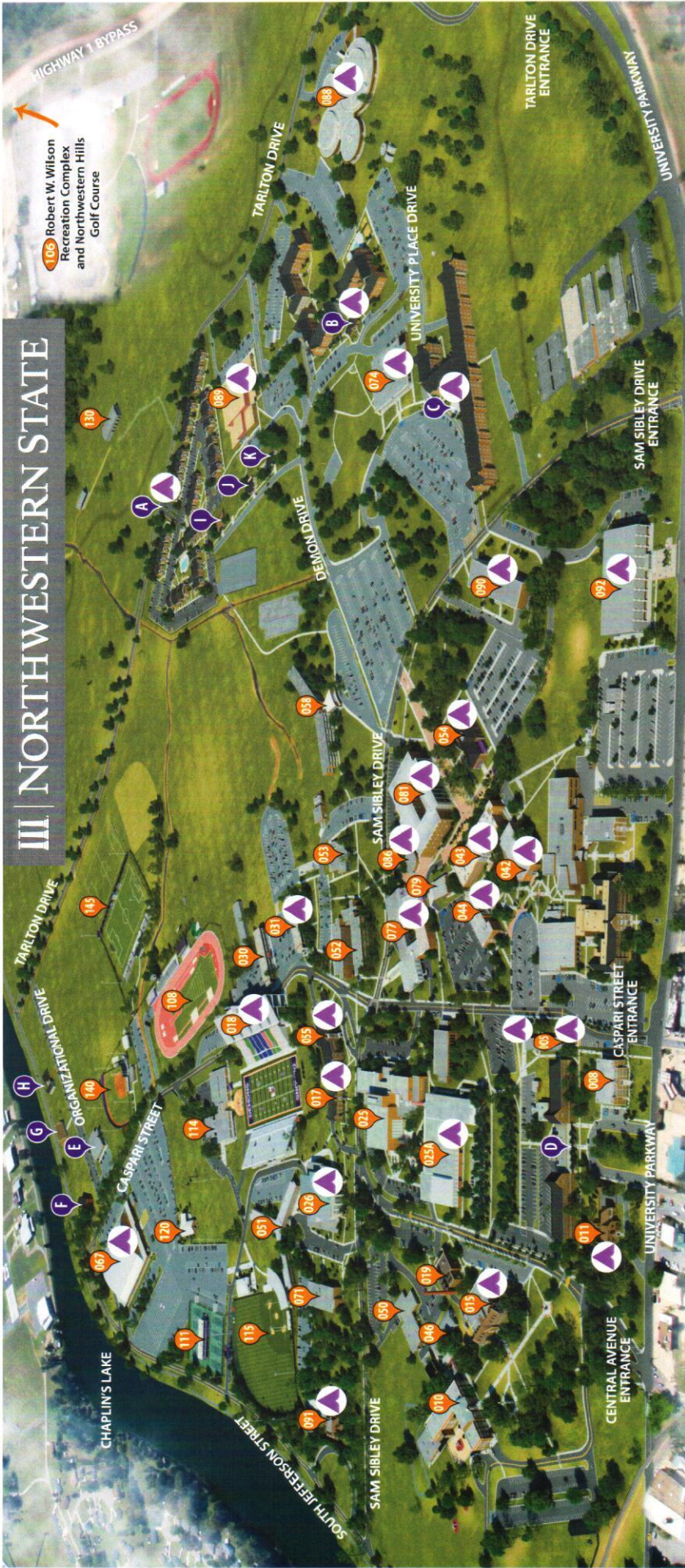
Satellite campuses developed in the cities Shreveport, Alexandria and Leesville, and today its Distance Learning Program allows students around the world to study at Northwestern. NSU offers more than 50 degree programs. It has an enrollment of nearly 9,200 students, of whom about 100 are international students. NSU claims more than 70,000 alumni.

NSU also hosts the Louisiana Scholars' College, Louisiana's designated Honors College in the Liberal Arts and Sciences, and the Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts.



Vic the Demon

III | NORTHWESTERN STATE



Bring the
NSU Campus Buildings
 to life with Aurasma
 WITH THE FREE
 AURASMA APP

- Download Aurasma Lite, available for iPhones, iPads and high powered Android devices.
- To follow NSU > open your Aurasma app. > in the search bar, type nsula > click the nsula public auras > click FOLLOW.
- Point your device at the building's sign and watch the image come to life as video content.
- Double tap to view full screen, or single tap to find out more.

005	Infirmiry/Health Services and University Police	052	Dodd Hall	114	Athletic Fieldhouse
008	National Center for Preservation Technology and Training	053	St. Denis Hall	115	Brown-Stroud Baseball Field
010	Warren Easton Hall	054	Williamson Hall	120	Collins Pavilion
011	Alumni Center	055	Student Services Center	130	Equine Center
015	Russell Hall	058	Caddo Hall	140	Lady Demon Softball Field
017	Caspari Hall	067	Prather Coliseum	145	Lady Demon Soccer Complex
018	Harry "Rags" Turpin Stadium	071	Roy Hall	On-Campus Student Housing	
019	Trisler Power Plant	074	Iberville Cafeteria	A University Columns	
025	A.A. Fredericks Fine Arts Center	077	Friedman Student Union Building	B University Place I	
025A	Creative and Performing Arts (CAPA) Annex	079	Culinary Arts Annex	C University Place II	
026	Wellness, Recreation and Activity Center (WRAC)	081	John S. Kyser Hall	D Varnado Hall	
028	Nesom Matatorium	086	Post Office	On-Campus Student Organization Bldgs.	
030	South Hall	088	Teacher Education Center	E	Baptist Collegiate Ministry (BCM)
031	James A. Noe Military Science Bldg	089	Health and Human Performance Building	F	Kappa Sigma House
042	Morrison Hall (Scholars' College)	090	Bienvenu Hall	G	Phi Mu House
043	Fournet Hall	091	Arnold J. Kilpatrick President's Residence	H	Sigma Sigma Sigma House
044	Family and Consumer Science Building	092	Eugene P. Watson Memorial Library	I	Theta Chi House
046	Warehouse	106	Recreation Complex Pavilion	J	Tau Kappa Epsilon House
050	Print Shop	108	Walter Ledet Track Complex	K	Alpha Omicron Pi House
051	Prudhomme Hall	111	Jack Fisher Tennis Complex		

Housing Information

We strongly recommend that you discuss housing matters (e.g., location, availability, and cost) with your sponsoring department (professors and scholars), the International Student Resource Center, and/or friends and relatives in the area well before you arrive. It is also advisable that if you have family members who will join you, it may be best to have them join you after your arrival, once you have been able to research and secure affordable housing, investigate schooling, etc.

International Student Resource Center is unable to secure housing in Natchitoches, but we can refer you to various resources and we'll be happy to assist you. Please contact us for information.

It is also important for you to discuss with your sponsoring department prior to your arrival other issues that may concern you, such as whether you will have office/lab space, how to obtain library access, how you will get to NSULA from an airport, etc.

You may choose to live on or off campus, depending on their budget, and preference. The following information may be helpful to you in finding housing in Natchitoches. Please note that on-campus housing will be on a first come first served basis.

On-Campus Housing.

On-campus residential accommodations at Northwestern State University are comprised of two communities, University Columns and University Place. Please visit Campus Housing website for additional information on cost and fees.

- University Columns <https://www.mystudentvillage.com/us/university-columns/> Ranges from \$685 – \$1,200 per month
- University Place <https://www.mystudentvillage.com/us/university-place/> Ranges from \$665 – \$875 per month

Off Campus Housing

Rental opportunities are varied in price, location, and availability. The following site is a good place to start looking for off-campus rental options:

- <http://www.homes.com/rentals/>
- You can also choose to share a house/apartment with other international students.

Registration for classes

International students in J-1 Visa status are required to register full-time. A full-time course load for undergraduate students is 12 credit hours (of which 9 (nine) have to be face to face courses and 3 (three) online), and for graduate students 9 credit hours (of which 6 (six) have to be face to face and 3 (three) online). Failure to do so may result in loss of status.

Along with your acceptance letter you will receive the specific instructions to create your username and password to access the NSUConnect registration system through myNSU at <https://my.nsula.edu>. Enter your user name and password to enter myNSU. If you need assistance in registering your classes contact us at international@nsula.edu, or come to our office and we will guide you through the process.

In your initial application you may have provided a preliminary list of courses that you were planning to take. You do not have to register for your courses based on this preliminary information. You will need to check with the online class schedule for your semester to make sure the classes you intend to take are indeed available. Please Note: In general, NSU does not have detailed course descriptions (or syllabi) available online. It is usual practice to only receive a syllabus on the first day of class. Sometimes, a department will have some

syllabi on their website, but that is very rare. Please select your courses using the descriptions found in the University Catalog.

Registration dates:

- March 14, 2016 – August 21, 2016
- Late Registration: August 22 – 30, 2016

Advice for Choosing Level of Classes for J-1 Students:

- Courses leveled 1000-2000 are considered “lower division” (for 1st & 2nd year university students) and are usually introductory in nature and have few prerequisites.
- Courses leveled 3000-4000 are considered “upper division” (for 3rd and 4th year university students)
- Courses leveled 5000 are considered graduate-level courses
- For each unit of class time, you should plan to spend minimum 2-3 hours per week studying outside of class and doing different assignments.

Obtaining your student ID

Students on the Natchitoches campus obtain their student ID cards from the ONE CARD Office, located in the Student Services Building, Suite 359. The ONE Card Office is open Monday through Thursday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon.

Student Health Services

Health Services provides convenient, on campus assessment, treatment and referral for students needing medical attention. A Registered Nurse is available daily and a Doctor comes in once a week (on Thursdays). Students do not need to pay for a checkup from the nurse. For a more thorough check up, students can visit the Doctor on his weekly stops or at his office, however, the student is responsible for a \$20.00 co-pay at the time of service. Other services prescribed by the physician are the responsibility of the student. Optional services are available for an additional fee. Students must present a current University ID for treatment. For more information visit www.healthservices.nsula.edu or call (318)357-5351.

NSU Policies

Alcohol & Drug Policy

- The university prohibits possession or consumption of alcohol on campus and the possession of alcoholic beverage containers except as provided by university policy that complies with all state and federal statutes.
- Northwestern is a member of the Drug-Free schools and campuses and abides by their standards regarding policies, athletic programs, educational programs, enforcement and assessment. Students and employees who fail to abide by university policies regarding alcohol and other drugs will be subject to disciplinary action according to established university policies and procedures that conform to local, state and federal laws.

Tobacco-Free Policy

- “Smoke-Free” means the prohibition of smoking as defined in R.S. 40:1300.253(14). “Tobacco-Free” means the prohibition of the use of tobacco derived or containing products, as defined in R.S. 40:1300.263(B)(2).
- All facilities, property (whether owned or leased), and all vehicles of Northwestern State University regardless of campus or location are tobacco free. The purpose of this policy is to foster a healthier environment for students, faculty, staff, and visitors on Northwestern State University’s campuses by

minimizing tobacco use. Effective Date: August 1, 2014.

- The use of all tobacco products in any form (smoking or chewing) is prohibited. Tobacco products shall be strictly prohibited anywhere on the campuses of Northwestern State.
- E-cigarettes are also prohibited anywhere on the campuses of Northwestern State.

Students and employees of Northwestern State University are hereby informed that the unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensing, possession or use of controlled substances is prohibited on university property.

Sexual Assault & Sexual Harassment

Northwestern State University has developed internal policies that prohibit discrimination and sexual misconduct on the basis of sex. It is the intention of the University to take whatever action may be needed to prevent, correct, and if necessary, sanction individuals who act in violation of this policy.

It is essential that students who are sexually assaulted receive proper medical treatment, legal advocacy, and counseling support as soon as possible.

Sexual Misconduct Policy

No student, employee, visitors to campus, third parties, or contractors at Northwestern State University shall be subjected to unsolicited and unwelcome sexual conduct, either verbal or physical. Sexual misconduct violates University policy as well as state and federal laws and is specifically prohibited. It is neither permitted nor condoned. Sexual harassment, sexual assault, and sexual violence including stalking, domestic and dating violence and abuse are forms of sexual discrimination.

Emergency Phone Numbers

911 This is the national emergency number for police, ambulance services, and fire department.

318-357-5431 Campus Police. 24 hours a day.

PURPLE ALERT: NSU Emergency Notification System

PURPLE ALERT is a rapid emergency notification system. At its core, PURPLE ALERT is a multi-part communications process for disseminating alerts to NSU students, faculty and staff.

You can register for PURPLE ALERTS at the following link:

<https://member.everbridge.net/index/453003085612883#/login>

Any questions on how to register, please e-mail Purple Alert at purple-alert@nsula.edu

Other Services

There are three faith based organizations that provide with 1 free or low-cost meals per week. These are:

Baptist Collegiate Ministry (BCM)

An open faith based ministry founded and supported by Louisiana Baptist that seeks to meet spiritual needs of all students. They provide 1 free lunch meal every Wednesday during the semester. 520 University Pkwy, across Campus.

Catholic Student Organization (CSO)

A faith based student organization based around the teachings of the Holy Roman Catholic Church. They are open to all students of all faiths, race, genders, etc. They provide 1 free dinner meal every Wednesday during the semester. 129 Second Street, a few steps across Campus.

Wesley Campus Ministries (WCM)

The Wesley Campus Ministry is a Christ-centered, student-led ministry in the Methodist tradition. The programs of this ministry are designed to build holy lives through Worship, Mission, Discipleship, and Fellowship. They provide lunch meals every Tuesday during the semester at the cost of \$1 for students and \$5 to the general public. The BCM is located at 500 Caspari Street, on Campus.

NSU FoodPantry

The Student Food Pantry opens two days per week during the semester. It is located in the Trisler Power Plant building across from CAPA and behind Russell Hall. Nonperishable foods, toiletries and gently-used t-shirts are available to all NSU students with a current NSU ID.

Cross-Cultural Experience. Get involved!!!

The J-1 exchange visitor visa was created with the primary purpose of facilitating cultural exchange between the United States and other nations, in so doing “building mutual understanding between Americans and people of other countries.” Cross-cultural exchange activities are an essential part of the University’s J-1 exchange visitor program and of our continued ability to sponsor exchange visitors across campus.

In addition to being professionally rewarding and productive, we hope that you find your participation in the J-1 program to be an enriching cross-cultural experience.

Cross-cultural programs can be organized around any number of general themes that participants might like to learn more about: civic responsibility; civil rights; community service and volunteerism; American history and exploration; youth leadership; science, technology, engineering and math in the local/global economy; personal or individual freedoms; American entrepreneurial spirit; democracy and governance; individual responsibility; holidays, music, folk culture and food; the media; government; American film, culture and the arts; and ethnic, racial and religious diversity in the U.S.

All sponsoring departments at NSU will provide opportunities for J-1 Exchange Visitors to engage in cross-cultural activities, that will vary in time and complexity, such as: campus tours, departmental luncheons, invitations to musical and theater performances, sporting events and social and cultural events related to sports, participating in NSU Greek Life, or one of the many others Student Organizations, celebrations honoring international students, excursions, outdoor recreation opportunities, and local cultural activities.

We strive to share our culture with our international visitors, but we also ensure they have adequate opportunities to share their culture and expertise with our University and the local community. The International Student Resource Center will be asking departments who sponsor exchange visitors to incorporate at least one cross cultural program into the visitors’ academic program. This might include attendance at a relevant conference, a round table discussion with fellow colleagues and/or students, a sight-seeing excursion, or inclusion in a holiday celebration. We also encourage hosting departments to help their exchange visitors to find opportunities to share their own culture, traditions, views, and expertise with Americans. This might include inviting a scholar or student to speak in a classroom or assisting in offering a lecture to the NSU or local communities on an area related to their own culture and society.

Sponsoring departments should feel free to contact the ISRC with any questions about the cross-cultural exchange component of the J-1 exchange visitor program.

The International Student Resource Center also offers the opportunity for you and your family to get involved with local American students and families from the community through two programs:

Family Friendship Program

The International Student Resource Center will pair you up with a local family to learn more about American culture, traditions and way of life. This will give you a unique opportunity to share your culture, and experience more about Natchitoches and Louisiana. Participating families will include you in their activities, invite you for family outings and meals and many other fun activities. This will be an enriching and unforgettable experience.

Student Friendship Program

Through this program, the International Student Resource Center will pair an international student with an American student who will help you acclimate to College life at NSU. This is a great way to make new friends and find a helping hand on campus. The ISRC will facilitate the first introduction. After that, the international and the host student will keep in touch throughout the semester or the duration of their stay.



If you are interested in participating in any of these programs, visit our website to find more information or fill out an application online at www.nsula.edu/international

Employment

Authorized Employment

As a J-1 Exchange Visitor, you are eligible for employment at NSU, but only in the field specified on the DS-2019. Unauthorized employment may result in a violation of immigration regulations and loss of valid J-1 status.

Long-term employment may require a change of immigration status for continued employment eligibility. Please consult the ISRC regarding any changes in your official title, salary or department to be certain that you are authorized to engage in such employment under your current J-1 status. J-1 status is not appropriate for tenured or tenure-track positions.

Incidental Employment Outside NSU for J-1 Professor and Scholars

It is possible for exchange visitors to obtain permission for incidental employment such as short-term consultations, lectures, or part-time teaching, at another institution during the time that they are at NSULA. Such employment must be directly related to your exchange visitor program objective, incidental to your primary program activities, and not delay the completion of your program at NSULA. Further, it must be approved by your

sponsoring department and authorized in writing by your program sponsor (International Student Resource Center) in advance of the work beginning. No other concurrent types of employment are permitted for J-1 scholars.

Know your rights as Temporary Workers in the U.S.

The Rights and Protections for Temporary Workers (also known as the Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Act: <http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/general/rights-protections-temporary-workers.html>)

Employment for J-1 Exchange Students

On-Campus Employment:

J-1 Exchange Visitors in the Student program are eligible for any on-campus employment as long as the following conditions are met:

- Remain in good academic standing.
- Continue to engage in a full course of study.
- Limit employment to no more than 20 hours per week while classes are in session and full time per week over summer break or when there are no classes.

Academic Training:

J-1 Exchange Visitors in the Student Program are eligible for Academic Training as long as the following requirements are met:

- Purpose in the U.S. is to study; not to work.
- Work is directly related to field of study.
- Maintain health insurance.
- Written permission from ISRC.

Other requirements for Academic Training include:

- Academic Training employment may not exceed the period of full course of study or 18 months, whichever is shorter. Students completing a doctoral degree are allowed a maximum of 36 months Academic Training. Part-time Academic Training counts against the amount of full-time employment available. For example, if you are eligible for 12 months of Academic Training and use 6 months as part-time Academic Training during your program, you will only have 6 months full-time Academic Training after your program.
- Earning more than one degree does not increase your eligibility for Academic Training.
- To obtain authorization for Academic Training, download the Academic Training form from the International Student Resource Center website and submit the complete form, along with a letter from employer (on letterhead) stating the following to ISRC:
 - Job title.
 - Brief description of goals and objectives of employment.
 - Dates and location of employment.
 - Number of hours per week.
 - Name and address of training supervisor.

The Academic Training form requires a section to be completed by your advisor before submitting to ISRC. Once received, the ISRC will issue a new DS-2019 within 5 business days. You may NOT work without this authorization and must be requested at least two weeks before graduation.

U.S. Social Security Number (SSN)

If you are employed by the university, you must obtain a Social Security Number (SSN) from the Social Security Administration (SSA) office in order to receive payment. Before you can apply for the number at the Social Security Administration, you need to register with the International Student Resource Center so we can validate your arrival in SEVIS. If you are not receiving wages in the U.S., you will not be eligible to apply for a social security number. If you have ever had a social security number before in the U.S., then it is valid for life. Further details will be discussed during Mandatory Orientation.

If you are not employed by the university, you are still eligible to apply for an SSN if you are in one of these visa categories: J-1 Short-term Scholar; J-1 Research Scholar; J-1 Professor; or J-2 Dependent with valid Employment Authorization Document (EAD). Please note that J-1 Student must obtain permission from the Responsible Officer to be employed on campus.

STEPS TO OBTAIN A SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER

1. Wait 10 days from the date you entered the United States or the start date of your DS-2019, whichever is later. This time is needed for your immigration information to appear in government databases.
2. Wait three days after attending the J-1 Exchange Visitor Orientation at ISRC. This time will allow for your SEVIS record to be validated. Please note that the SSA will not issue a SSN until your SEVIS record has been validated.
3. Present the following documents in person at the SSA Office:
 - Completed SSN Application – <http://www.ssa.gov/online/ss-5.pdf>
 - Passport
 - I-94 record
 - DS-2019
 - Appointment or Visiting Scholar Letter from your hosting department (if applicable)
 - Employment Verification Letter from the hiring department or office (for J-1 Student)
4. The SSA office will issue a receipt for your application. You should receive your new Social Security card in the mail within 14 business days. Be sure to include a reliable mailing address on your SSN application. Once an SSN has been issued to you, the same number will be valid indefinitely.

If you are paid by NSULA, you will need to take your SSN to the Payroll Office in St. Dennis Hall.

Social Security Office in Natchitoches

950 Keyser Ave.
1(855) 634-4195

<https://www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10181.pdf>

Historic City of Natchitoches



3 Front Street & Riverbank

Natchitoches (Nack-a-tish), is the oldest settlement in the Louisiana Purchase. Established in 1714, Natchitoches' cultural richness lies in its perfect mix of European and Cajun traditions. This can be appreciated through its architecture, heritage and lifestyle. The City of Natchitoches is the heart of Natchitoches Parish.

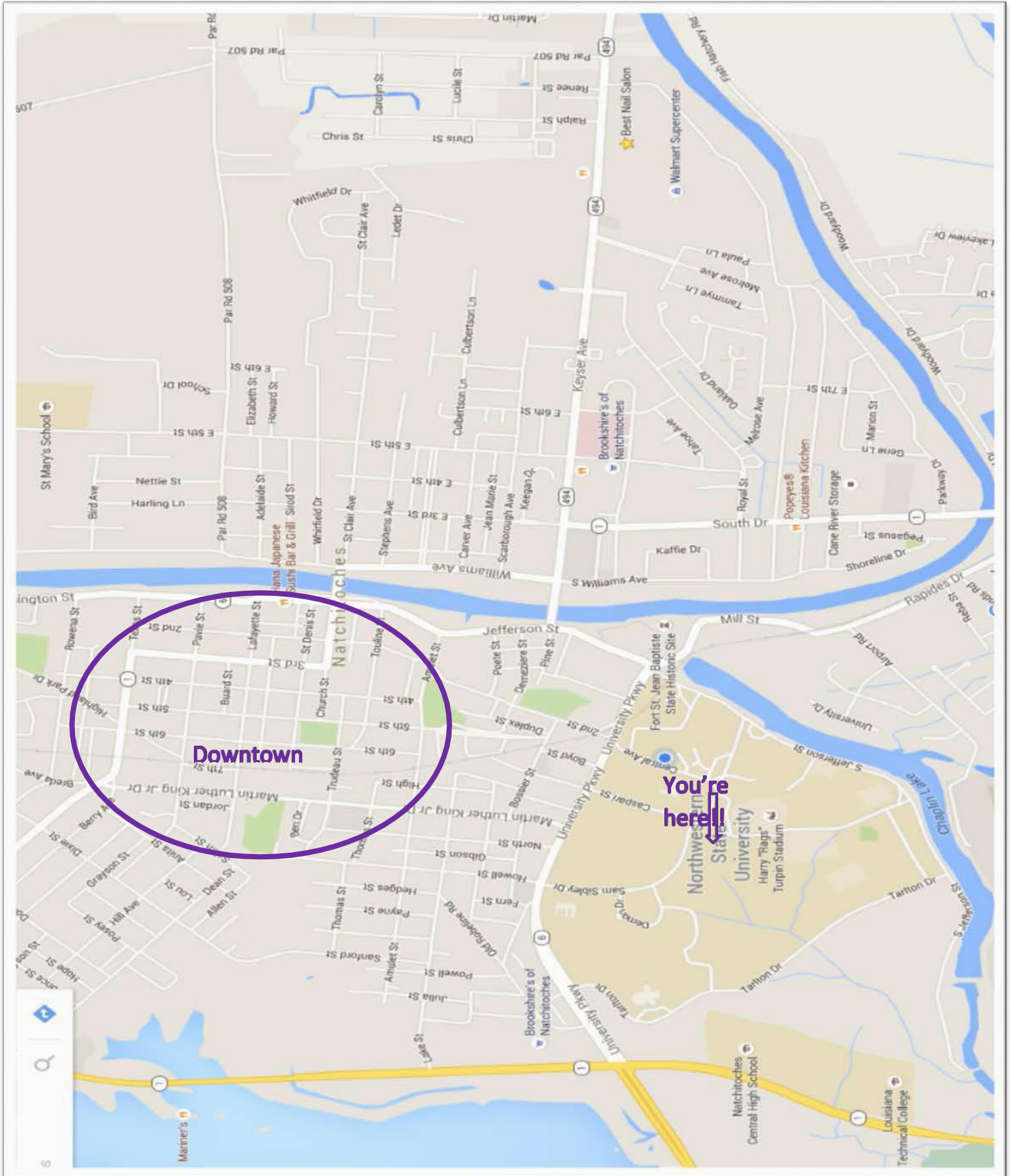
The Natchitoches area, is home to historic sites, Creole plantations, and museums all within the boundaries of the Cane River National Heritage Area. The City's Historic Landmark District, which fronts Cane River Lake and encompasses a 33-block area, includes many historic homes, churches, local boutiques and gift shops, fabulous dining options and plenty of bed & breakfasts.

The region is also known for the filming of the famous 80's movie "Steel Magnolias" as well as year-round festivals including the annual December Festival of Lights. Natchitoches is also the new home to the Louisiana Sports Hall of Fame and Northwest Louisiana History Museum.

Places to visit...

- 4 Seasons Farm
 - Adai Indian Nation Cultural Center
 - Bayou Pierre Alligator Park
 - Briarwood Nature Preserve
 - Christmas in the Park
 - City of Lights Christmas Festival
 - Dark Woods Haunted House
 - Fort St. Jean Baptiste Historic Site
 - Grand Ecore Visitors Center
 - Historic Cemeteries
 - Historic District
 - Hodges Gardens State Park
 - Immaculate Conception Catholic Church
 - Louisiana Sports Hall of Fame and Northwest Louisiana History Museum
 - Magnolia Plantation Complex
 - Melrose Plantation
 - Natchitoches Heritage Art Gallery
 - Oakland Plantation
 - Toledo Bend Reservoir (Cypress Bend Resort)
- For more information on these sites visit:
https://www.natchitoches.com/listings/t-hings-to-do/activities?field_location_type_value=All

Map of Natchitoches



Other Services and Information about living in Natchitoches

Public Transportation

There is no public transportation in the city of Natchitoches. If you live close to campus, walking or biking is an option. The city is constantly improving public facilities for pedestrians. If your stay will take at least a year, or longer, it might be a good idea to consider buying a used car, or renting one for short periods of time if you plan to travel outside of Natchitoches.

Buying a Car: you can buy a used car either from a dealer or directly from a private party. Typically, it is cheaper to buy from a private party but it is important that you thoroughly research your purchase either way. Keep in mind the expenses of auto insurance, sales tax, title application, vehicle registration, repairs and maintenance in addition to the sales price.

Car Insurance: If you are planning on buying a car, plan your finances because you will have to buy a car insurance plan. There are many options and companies to choose from. A good start point is to ask friends and acquaintances who own a car about their car insurance, to see what plan would fit your needs and budget.

Car Rentals in Natchitoches: Renting a car is a good option if you plan to make a few short trips during your stay. Enterprise is the only company in Natchitoches that rents cars to international students with driver's license from their country of origin. You will need a credit card, pay coverage, or show proof on insurance, have a valid driver's license, and if you are between the ages of 21-25 you will pay a "young driver's fee".

Climate and Clothing: Louisiana's weather is hot and humid most of the year, although the temperature can drop during the winter. Pack enough clothing items appropriate for temperatures ranging from 25-40 degrees Celsius if you are coming in the Spring, Summer or Fall. Be aware that it rains often in Louisiana, but if you do not want to carry clothing items for rain, such as rain jacket, umbrella and rain boots, you can find them easily in various stores in Natchitoches. Pack a coat and/or a jacket and appropriate clothing items for temperatures ranging from 17 to -5 degrees Celsius for the winter. Winters in Natchitoches are relatively mild. It may snow only once every 5-10 years. Natchitoches averages 54.93 inches (1,395 mm) of rain per year.

Money: Before arrival you should exchange money into US dollars to have cash available upon arrival. Traveler's checks may be helpful, but not all stores and restaurants accept them. Make an attempt to bring cash in denominations of less than \$100.00. When opening a bank account, note that it may take extra time to process international checks or wires and prepare accordingly.

Financial Arrangements: Make financial arrangements to receive money for living expenses if not covered by your department and/or sponsor. Living expenses include: room and board, medical insurance, and other miscellaneous expenses.

Cost of Living: Cost of living varies greatly depending on where you choose to live and your preferences. Generally, if you live near campus you will need (at minimum) \$12,000/year and \$15,000/ year if living on-campus.

Renter's Insurance: Renter's insurance may be required by your landlord if you live off-campus. This insurance is used in the case of a robbery, injury in your home, fire, water spilled on a laptop, etc. The cost of renter's insurance is low and a wise purchase.

Local Library: Besides the Watson Memorial Library on the main NSU campus, in Natchitoches you can visit the Natchitoches Parish Library. They organize many events and activities for children and families. For more information visit their website: <http://www.youseemore.com/natchitoches/default.asp>

Cellphone Service

Some cell phone companies in the U.S. require that you have a Social Security Number (SSN) to purchase a service plan. If you are not eligible for a SSN immediately, ask the cellphone companies about service plans for internationals. In most cases, the cellphone companies can offer you a pre-paid plan that requires no credit card or identification numbers.

In Natchitoches, there are have three cellphone companies (there are many more online if you decide to purchase it through a cellphone carrier's website directly).

- ATT Store
929 Keyser Ave.
Tel. (318)352-3702
- Cellular One203
Keyser Ave.
Tel. (318)357-9596
- Verizon
707 Keyser Ave.
Tel. (318)352-957

Post Office

- US Post Office (On NSU Campus)
175 Sam Sibley Dr. Tel. (318) 357-5696
- US Post Office 240 St. Denis St.
Tel. (318) 357-1669
- US Post Office
727 Keyser Ave.
Tel. (800) 275-8777

Grocery Stores

- Walmart Supercenter (Subway in it) 925 Keyser Ave.
Open 24 hrs.
- Brookshire's
5696 Hwy 1 Bypass Open until 12:00 a.m.
- Brookshire's 318 Dixie Plaza
Open until 10:00 p.m.
- Save-A-Lot
Broadmore Shopping Center Open until 8:00 p.m

Local Restaurants and Fast Food chains

- Breakfast Nook 105 Church Street Tel. (318) 352-4491
- Burger King 915 Keyser Ave.
Tel. (318) 356-9384
- Cane's Chicken Fingers 409 Keyser Ave. Tel. (318) 356-0023
- Cane River Bar & Grill 1125 Washington St. Tel. (318) 352-2600
- Chili's Grill & Bar (Lunch Specials) 932 Keyser Ave. Tel. (318) 357-0972
- Domino's Pizza (Coupons) 101 South Drive Tel. (318) 352-6382
- El Nopal (Lunch Specials) 117 South Drive Tel. (318) 214-0219
- Maglieaux's on the Cane 805 Washington St. Tel. (318) 354-776
- McDonald's (Open 24 hrs.) 304 Keyser Ave.
Tel. (318) 352-7474
- Merci Beaucoup 127 Church Street Tel. (318) 352-6634
- Peggy's Pizza 4116 University Parkway Tel. (318) 356-9200
- Pioneer Pub 812 Washington St. Tel. (318) 352-4884
- Pizza Hut (All you can eat lunch buffet) 801

- El Patron (Lunch Specials)
109 South Drive Tel. (318)
238-3013
- Hana Sushi Bar & Grill (Lunch Specials)
750 Front Street Tel. (318) 356-0989
- Hana Seafood and Hibachi Grill
814 Keyser Ave. Tel. (318) 352-
6658
- IHOP 5119 University Parkway Tel. (318) 228-
8860
- Johnny’s Pizza (All you can eat lunchbuffet) 312
Dixie Plaza Tel. (318) 228-8842
- Landing Restaurant 530
Front Street Tel. (318)
352-1579
- Lasyone’s Meat Pie Restaurant 622
2nd Street Tel. (318) 352-3353
- Little Caesar’s Pizza
244 Keyser Ave. Tel.
(318) 238-7575
- Lucky Village Chinese Buffet
929 Keyser Ave. Tel. (318)
352-8588
- Mariner’s Restaurant
5948 Highway 1 Bypass
Tel. (318) 357-1220
- Keyser Ave. Tel. (318)
357-8559
- Popeye’s Louisiana
Kitchen 218 South Drive
Tel. (318) 352-9663
- Popeye’s Louisiana
Kitchen 5101 University
Parkway Tel. (318) 356-
9220
- Popeye’s Louisiana
Kitchen 5101 University
Parkway Tel. (318) 356-
9220
- Subway 122 South Drive
Tel. (318) 238-2242
- Southern Classic Chicken
1433 Texas Street Tel.
(318) 352-7700
- Southern Classic Chicken
1433 Texas Street Tel.
(318) 352-7700
- Taco Bell 127 South
Drive Tel. (318) 352-
1509
- Trail Boss Steakhouse
301 South Drive Tel.
(318) 352-2080
- Wendy’s 5103
University Parkway

Opening a Bank Account

Once you are settled, you might want to open a bank account to keep your money in a secure location. You can open a checking account, savings account or a combination of both. You will be provided with a Debit Card to use it at an ATM (Automated Teller Machine). In most cases you will need a SSN to open a bank account.

If you are planning to have money transferred or wired from abroad, be aware that there may be a delay of a few days or weeks before you can access your money. Inquire with the bank on wait times depending on the type of deposit you will make.

Be advised that in most cases you will need a SSN to open a bank account.

The following banks are within walking distance from the NSU campus. These banks have ATM machines located throughout the city and state:

- City Bank and Trust Company 600
University Parkway
Tel. (318)357-3722
- Bank of Montgomery
814 Washington St.
Tel. (318)352-3060
- Sabine State Bank and Trust Company 780
Front Street #103
Tel. (318)352-4401
- MidSouth Bank
4115 University Pkwy
Tel. (318)356-9733

****If you do not have a SSN and need to open an account to have money wired, you can contact Mrs. Cathy at this MidSouth Bank branch:**

- MidSouth Bank
4115 University Pkwy
Tel. (318)356-9733

Louisiana Driver's License and Photo ID Card

You and your J-2 dependents may be eligible to apply for a Louisiana Driver's License or a Louisiana Photo ID Card at the Louisiana Office of Motor Vehicles. The Photo ID Card does not give you permission to drive, but can be used for local identification purposes. In Natchitoches the office is located at 113 South Drive, Suite 10, Natchitoches, LA 71457. Their office hours are Monday thru Friday 8:00 AM-4:00 PM. Phone number: 318-357-3166.

Local hospitals in Natchitoches

Natchitoches Regional Medical Center
501 Keyser Ave, Natchitoches, LA 71457
Phone: (318) 214-4200

Natchitoches Medical Specialists
1029 Keyser Ave # J, Natchitoches, LA 71457
Phone:(318) 238-6001

Cornerstone Pediatrics
1055 Parkway Dr #A, Natchitoches, LA 71457
(318) 352-6464

Christus health Hospital
501 Keyser Ave, Natchitoches, LA 71457
Phone:(318) 214-4200

Natchitoches Nursing & Rehab
750 Keyser Ave, Natchitoches, LA 71457
Phone:(318) 352-8779

Natchitoches Community Care Center
720 Keyser Ave, Natchitoches, LA 71457
Phone:(318) 352-8296

Ingram Medical Clinic
114 E 5th St, Natchitoches, LA 71457
Phone:(318) 354-9348

Mid State Orthopedic & Sport
134 E 5th St, Natchitoches, LA 71457
Phone:(318) 352-1555

Life Care Clinic
740 Keyser Ave Ste F, Natchitoches, LA 71457
(318) 238-5050

Northwestern La Cancer Center
211 Medical Dr, Natchitoches, LA 71457
(318) 238-3322

Natchitoches Women's care
627 Bienville Cir, Natchitoches, LA 71457
(318) 352-9595

Louisiana Extended Care Hospital
415 Bienville St Ste 1, Natchitoches, LA 71457
(318) 352-1112

Natchitoches Family Eye Care
946 Keyser Ave, Natchitoches, LA 71457
(318) 357-8194

Phone: (318) 356-5566

NRMC Walk-in Clinic
740 Keyser Ave E, Natchitoches, LA 71457
(318) 238-5300

Urgent care

Natchitoches Urgent Care Clinic
321 Keyser Ave, Natchitoches, LA 71457

Velocity Care Urgent Treatment Center
307 Keyser Ave, Natchitoches, LA 71457
(318) 352-5221

Pharmacies

Causey's Ltc Pharmacy
Pharmacy
407 Bienville St
(318) 352-3141

Pharmacy
925 Keyser Ave
(318) 352-1903

1029 Keyser Ave
(318) 238-6001

Rite Aid
Pharmacy
601 Keyser Ave
(318) 352-2546

Cade's Pharmacy
Pharmacy
1053 Parkway Dr
(318) 354-0501

Walgreens
Convenience Store
300 Keyser Ave
(318) 357-0451

Brookshire's Pharmacy
Pharmacy
5696 LA-1
(318) 214-0048

Southern Scripts LLC
Pharmacy
407 Bienville St
(318) 214-4764

Leah M. Snyder, PharmD
Pharmacy
405 Bienville St

Walmart Pharmacy

Natchitoches Medical Specialists
Orthopedic Surgeon

Brookshire's of Natchitoches
Grocery Store
318 Dixie Plaza
(318) 352-4000

Daycare

Centers

Fay's Day Care & Preschool
220 E 3rd St
(318) 352-1910

Fun Time Palace
410 Touline St
(318) 357-8346

Kiddie Courts Learning Center
1513 Berry Ave
(318) 356-7070

Tiny Tots Day Care
1212 Keyser Ave
(318) 357-0582

Fun Time Palace
410 Touline St
(318) 357-8346

A Z 123 Preschool & Learning
1036 4th St
(318) 354-0002

Bright Beginnings
102 Bienville St
(318) 352-0977

NSU Headstart
350 Sam Sibley Dr
(318) 357-0888

Cobblestones Childhood
Development Center
524 4th St
(318) 357-1497

K-12 Schools in Natchitoches

For a complete list visit the Natchitoches Parish School Board website: <http://www.nat.k12.la.us/schools/>

Religious organizations by denomination

Besides attending school, there are other ways and places to make new friends and to become part of the community. Below is a list of some of the religious organization available in Natchitoches.

BAPTIST

- Baptist Collegiate Ministries. NSU Campus <http://www.districteightmissions.com/templates/System/details.asp?id=38114&PID=457145>
- First Baptist Church (North Street). <http://firstbaptistnorthstreet.com/>
- First Baptist Church (Second Street). <http://www.fbcnatchitoches.net/>
- Trinity Baptist Church. <http://www.tbcnla.net/>
- Westside Baptist Church. <http://www.westside.life/>

CATHOLIC

- Holy Cross Church. <http://www.holycross129.org/>
- St. Anthony Catholic Church. <http://stanthonyofpaduanatchitoches.com/> Immaculate Conception Church. <http://www.minorbasilica.org/#the-minor-basilica>

ISLAM

- Islamic Center of Natchitoches. <http://www.islamicfinder.org/getitWorld.php?id=27754>

METHODIST

- First United Methodist Church. <http://www.fumcnla.org/>

PRESBYTERIAN

- First Presbyterian Church of Natchitoches. <http://www.fpcnatchitoches.org/>
- River Community Church
- Friendship Baptist Church

For a complete list of churches and religious organizations in Natchitoches, visit:

<http://www.churchangel.com/zips/LA-71457/Natchitoches.htm>

Shopping

Front Street and Shopping Malls near Natchitoches

There are many stores in Natchitoches Historic District you can shop for clothes, gifts, art, antiques and much more. If you are looking for a Shopping Mall you will need to travel to Alexandria or Shreveport.

Convenience Stores

Many gas stations contain mini food markets or convenience stores. They are easy places to pick up a few items such as fresh milk and ice, and many are open 24 hours per day. Their prices, however, tend to be much higher than grocery stores, so you probably will not want to do the majority of your food shopping there.

Garage Sales

A garage sale is a sale of household items, clothes, furniture, and personal items at a home. For specific times and locations, check the classified section of local newspapers, or pay attention to the signs posted alongside the

streets that announce garage sales. Go early to see the largest selection of items. You can usually offer a price lower than what the seller has marked, but plan on buying your items with cash.

Classifieds

Classified advertisements list furniture and other items for sale by individuals.

Thrift Stores/Furniture Stores

You can find used furniture, clothing, household items and more in stores such as Goodwill. In Natchitoches it is located at: 311 South Dr # A, Natchitoches, LA 71457, Phone: (318) 356-0429.

Living in the United States

American life and customs

The United States of America is a very large and diverse country with a vast array of cultural differences from coast to coast. If you travel from Philly to California, Texas, or Georgia you will see huge differences in how people talk, interact, and function. Philly may have a slower but friendlier appearance than New York, but California is even “slower”, and someone from California may annoy a New Yorker. It is also not unusual for someone to be extremely proud to be from their home state and still continue to have strong ties where they grew up, even if they haven’t lived there in years.

Americans are generally very proud of being American and like to display the American Flag. Conversely, most Americans are also extremely proud of their heritage. If you ask an American where they are from or where their parents came from, you may get an answer like “I’m a 1/4 German, 1/4 Polish, 1/4 English, 1/8 Cherokee and 1/8 French!”

Below are some cultural insights that can help you understand Americans better:

1. *Americans value being on time.* “Time is money” can be a mantra in most of the United States. Do your best to be at least 5 minutes early or on time. If you will be late, let the person you are meeting know and apologize.
2. *Americans like privacy and personal space.*
 - It is rare for Americans to show up unannounced anywhere. It’s a sign of respect and courtesy to make sure someone is available before dropping in at their home/room/apartment/office.
 - Americans need about an arm’s length of personal space. Any closer and they may interpret your actions as intimidating or challenging and back up or become extremely uncomfortable.
 - Americans rarely hug or kiss someone when they first meet them. Discuss with your new friends what’s appropriate when greeting each other. It will likely be different with each friend.
3. *Americans are direct and honest.* If you ask an American a question, you will probably get an honest answer, and they won’t ask you for your input if they don’t want it.
 - *It’s important to many Americans to be upfront with problems and not put them off.* Americans believe that problems can be solved and will work tirelessly to fix them, if they know about them.
 - Americans rarely save face. It’s viewed negatively when someone passes blame from a problem to someone else or makes excuses.
 - Americans are not good at “hints”, body language, or metaphors. They will say what they believe and believe what they say.
4. *Americans can seem friendly and unfriendly at the same time.* It is common for an American to ask you how you are doing with no intention of really finding out how you are.
 - Americans can also seem “flaky,” i.e.: don’t follow through with social plans. If you make plans with an American, be ready for the possibility that the plans will change or be cancelled.
 - It’s not uncommon for Americans to smile at someone while crossing the road, joke with

another person in line, or talk to someone at an event without knowing this person, getting to know them, or even intending to get to know them.

- Americans love “small talk,” i.e.: conversations without real substance such as the weather, traffic, or uncontroversial topics in which everyone can find common ground.

5. *Americans value independence, equality, and freedom*

- The U.S. has a very individualistic culture. People are taught at a young age to do things on their own and a high value is placed on the “self-made” person, who rose from nothing to riches.
- Equality is VERY important to Americans—even if in practice, it doesn’t always happen. There are many rules in the U.S. (like waiting for a traffic light to turn green and waiting in line) that are very important. Americans also tend to become upset when others break the rules. Don’t ever cut in front of someone in a line, or you may get yelled at.
- Freedom is one of the building blocks of American culture. Americans believe that everyone has the right to say or think what they want, even if they don’t agree with it.

6. *Americans value personal hygiene and cleanliness.*

- This is a very regional preference. In many areas, is perfectly acceptable to go to class in your pajamas, whereas in other regions people may dress up to go to Walmart.
- Americans normally take grooming and hygiene seriously, and it’s not uncommon for them to shower 2 or 3 times a day, especially in the summer months. They may avoid you or make comments if you do not pay attention to or have a lapse in your hygiene.

7. *Americans value etiquette.*

- Be polite when asking for something. Americans don’t take well to demands. When sending an email or asking for a favor, show you are appreciative and don’t just demand for something to be done—even if you are waiting for something urgently.

8. *Americans value education and curiosity.*

- If you aren’t sure about something, ask. Most Americans have grown up asking questions and being asked questions. Americans won’t make fun of you for trying. Americans love to talk, especially about themselves, and share their opinions. Just make sure to ask multiple people, or you will end up with only one perspective.

9. *Americans value control.*

- Americans believe they control their own life and destiny, and it’s very important for them to feel like they are in control. Americans don’t like it when they don’t know what’s happening or when things don’t go according to plan. Most of the time, Americans believe that if you work hard, you will achieve your goals. They often can’t understand when people work hard but don’t advance in society.

10. *Americans LOVE their sports teams.*

- When we say love, we really mean love. Many fans are so devoted they will follow their teams throughout the country during the sport season. Thankfully, Americans are very respectful of the rivalry team and its fans, so, it will never be violence associated with sports, even if historical rivals are playing. If it ever happens Americans will see it as an exception. Football, baseball, and basketball are the biggest three sports in the U.S. and often fans will wear clothes that support their favorite teams. Sometimes there are strong rivalries between different groups, so be aware of teams playing nearby.

A few other notes about life and customs in the US:

- American’s really appreciate convenience and will look for most convenient options. Online ordering is very popular, and, depending on your location, you can order everything from hand soap to groceries to sushi! You will also find many large (“Big Box”) stores that carry everything: groceries, cleaning

supplies, a pharmacy, an optometrist, alcohol beverages and even weapons (yes, you read this correctly!).

- Learn to be self-aware, even if others aren't. Be mindful of others around you. Is someone trying to study? Is it quiet hours in the residence halls? Are you taking up the whole sidewalk? We could all benefit from being more mindful.
- Chew with your mouth closed and don't slurp. In the U.S., both of these habits are considered rude, and you should also avoid burping or making other bodily noises.
- The drinking age for alcohol in the United States is 21, and you **cannot** drive after drinking.
- Tobacco products and gambling is legal at age 18. Tobacco is not allowed on the NSU Campus.

Most importantly, be brave! Introduce yourself to American students, try new things, and never be afraid to ask questions. ISRC is available to help with questions and problems, but we can only help if you tell us.

Travel within the United States

Once within the United States, you are allowed to travel in the country. If you are traveling outside of Natchitoches, you should take your original passport, DS-2019 and I-94 record.

Travel outside the United States

To enter the United States after a temporary trip abroad, you will need your:

- Passport (valid for 6 months or longer upon entry)
- Valid J-1 visa (Canadian citizens are exempt from the visa requirement)
- DS-2019 signed for travel within the last 12 months

If you are traveling to a country that is not your country of citizenship, please consult that country's consulate to determine if you require an entry visa. For a list of foreign consulates in the United States, see <http://www.state.gov/s/cpr/rls/fco>

In order to re-enter the U.S. in J-1/J-2 status you must have your DS-2019 endorsed by NSU's responsible officer or alternate responsible officer. It is your responsibility to keep your endorsed DS-2019 with your passport at all times. If your endorsement dates have expired, you must contact the ISRC prior to your departure for re-endorsement. Failure to do so, will certainly delay your timely return to the U.S. Since 9/11, it has become increasingly difficult to obtain a new visa or revalidate your visa outside of your home country. We recommend that all revalidations are completed at the consular office in your home country.

You may find that the validity dates of the visa stamp in your passport may be shorter than the validity dates of your DS-2019. This is not unusual. Once you have entered the U.S. with a valid visa, you are permitted to stay (even if your visa stamp has expired) for as long as is authorized on your DS-2019. This is because the visa stamp is simply an entry permit; once in, your stay is governed by the dates on the DS-2019. If your visa stamp expires or if you use all the entries permitted you will have to obtain a new visa on your next trip outside the U.S. This can take several weeks or even months depending on your citizenship and academic field, so make sure you have allowed sufficient time to get a new visa stamp while you are out of the U.S.

J-1 Visa Renewal

If your J-1 visa has expired and you wish to travel internationally, you must renew your expired visa at a U.S. Consulate or Embassy before you return to the United States. Processing times vary greatly among the different consulates, so please plan accordingly. To check current visa interview and processing times at a specific U.S.

Consulate, consult the Department of State's website <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en.html>. Please note that the wait times listed do not include any delays that may occur as a result of background or security checks.

Automatic Visa Revalidation (Avr)

Travel with an expired visa using Automatic Visa Revalidation (AVR) is permitted when you travel to a contiguous territory (Canada, Mexico, and certain Caribbean Islands) for 30 days or less and do not apply for a U.S. visa during your travel. To use AVR, you **MUST** keep your original I-94 record when you depart the United States. **Do not surrender it to the airline or immigration official, as it is required for your re-entry to the United States.** You will need to present the following documents in order to re-enter the United States using AVR:

- Passport
- Expired J-1 visa stamp
- DS-2019 signed for travel within the last 12 months
- I-94 record

Tax Information

As in most countries, the tax laws in the United States are very complicated. Tax treaty benefits, Social Security taxes, and filing requirements depend on your visa status, the purpose of your visit, the number of days you will be in the United States, and the history of prior visits.

Federal, State and Local Taxes: Generally, your earnings are subject to applicable federal, state and local taxes, and employers are required by law to withhold these taxes from your paycheck. By April 15 of each year, you must file an income tax return with the federal and state governments covering the prior calendar year to determine whether you owe more taxes or are eligible for a refund. It is your responsibility to complete and mail your tax return by the April 15th deadline, even if you are no longer in the United States. If you are paid by NSU, Payroll Services will issue your payment and tax summary to you (Form W-2 and/or Form 1042-S) for tax filing purposes. The ISRC does not provide assistance with completing tax returns. If you have questions about filing tax returns, it is a good practice to consult and hire the services of a Certified Public Accountant. There are several in the Natchitoches area.

Tax Treaty Exemptions

Exchange visitors from countries that have tax treaty agreements with the United States should find out about the specific terms of the treaty before arriving in the U.S. If you are a resident of a country with which the United States has a tax treaty, you may be exempt from the payment of U.S. federal income tax on some or all of the income that you earn while employed at NSU. Please consult IRS Publication 901 at <http://www.irs.gov/publications/p901/index.html> for more information on tax treaties. Please consult with Human Resources and the Payroll Services in St. Dennis Hall.

Bringing a J-2 dependent family member once in the United States

To request a DS-2019 for a family member who wishes to apply for a J-2 dependent visa, please indicate so on the Request for Immigration Document Form. If you are requesting to add your family as dependents after arrival in the U.S., complete the Add a Dependent Form. Send the following information to international@nsula.edu or schedule an appointment with your advisor and bring the following documents:

- Copy of biographical page of passport for each dependent.
- Evidence of additional funding.

Maintaining Status, J-2 dependents

J-2 dependent status is dependent upon your J-1 Exchange Visitor status. Therefore, you cannot exit the United States and leave your J-2 dependents in the United States for long periods of time. Also, once your J-1 program is complete or if your program is terminated, you and your dependents must exit the United States.

Employment for J-2 dependents

J-2 dependents may apply for employment authorization through U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS) after arriving in the United States. Applications require a fee and take approximately 90 days to be processed by USCIS. For application procedures, please set up an appointment with an ISRC advisor. Learn more at <http://www.uscis.gov/working-united-states/students-and-exchange-visitors/exchange-visitors>

Study/Research

J-2 dependents may enroll in full-time or part-time study, engage in research, or volunteer for the duration of your J-1 program. In order to be paid for any activities, your dependent must have prior employment authorization from USCIS.

Departure Checklist

- **Early exit: Email ISRC** if you are leaving the United States more than 30 days prior to the end date on your Form DS-2019.
- **Update your forwarding address with the ISRC.** Also, make certain that your hosting department has your current home country address.
- **Pay your University fees, if applicable.** This includes any outstanding fees that you may have accrued on campus for services such as library dues, University Health Services, etc.
- **Save all of your immigration documents.** Keep all of your DS-2019s, passports, I-94 records, and visas even after they expire. They may be helpful when arranging your future trips to the United States. Also be sure to keep your Social Security Card, Louisiana Driver's License and NSU ID.
- **File your tax return or mark your calendar for tax filing season.**
- **Request the return of your apartment deposit** from your apartment complex or landlord. You will need to have a walk-through in the apartment with the apartment complex manager or landlord to make sure that you are eligible to receive your deposit back. Note: 30- or 60-day notice of move out may be required by your lease.
- **Make sure you have received reimbursement** on all of your medical insurance claims, if you filed any for yourself or your dependents. Update your forwarding address with the insurance company if any reimbursement is still due to you.
- **Visit Human Resources and Payroll Services (if you received a salary from NSU), to complete any necessary paperwork before your departure.**
- **Close your bank account** if you do not intend to return to the United States.
- **Take J-1 Exchange Visitor Exit Survey**

NORTHWESTERN STATE UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA

CERTIFICATE OF AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING

FOR J-1 EXCHANGE VISITORS of PRE-ARRIVAL AND ORIENTATION INFORMATION

Below is a summary of the responsibilities and benefits placed on Exchange Visitors in J-1 status by the United States Department of State. Read carefully, sign and date and the bottom, and return to the International Student Resource Center at the Mandatory Orientation.

TERMS OF AGREEMENT OF RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR J-1 EXCHANGE VISITORS

1. **Purpose of Visit:** J-1 Exchange Visitors are here to pursue a specific objective, research goal, learning experience, etc. You are not allowed to engage in activities which alter your principal program objectives.
2. **Health Insurance:** All J-1 Exchange Visitors must maintain adequate health insurance for themselves and J-2 dependents for the length of the DS-2019.
3. **Employment:** As a J-1 Exchange Visitor, you may only work or conduct research in the field listed under item 4 on your Form DS-2019. You cannot undertake any form of work, paid or unpaid, without prior consultation and written approval from the ISRC. You should not resign from your position at NSU or accept a change in position appointment without first contacting the ISRC.
4. **Change of Address:** All J-1 Exchange Visitors are required to inform the ISRC within 10 days of any change of address.
5. **Changes to your J-1 program:** Any proposed changes in program dates, funding, site of activity, supervisor, program activities, etc. must be authorized by the ISRC in advance. Contact the ISRC if you anticipate changes need to be made to your program.
6. **Travel:** To travel outside of the U.S. during your Exchange program, you will need to obtain a travel endorsement on your DS-2019 before you leave. You should not leave the U.S. for more than 30 days without prior approval from your NSU supervisor and the ISRC. When traveling abroad for more than 30 days, you should take your J-2 dependents with you.
7. **Departure:** When you leave the U.S. permanently, please submit the Departure Form before your departure, so the ISRC can update your immigration record accordingly.
8. **12 month bar on repeat participation:** If you have been in the U.S. in a J-1 Exchange program for more than 6 months, you are subject to a 12 month bar on returning to the U.S. as a J-1 Research Scholar or Professor category. People in the Short Term Scholar category are exempt from this bar.
9. **24 month bar on repeat participation:** If you are in the U.S. in the J-1 Research Scholar or Professor category, you are subject to a 24 month bar instead of the above 12 month bar. This bar prohibits you from returning to the U.S. for a 2nd program as a J-1 Research Scholar or Professor for 24 months after your initial program ends.
10. **Two Year Home Residency Requirement (212(e)):** You may be subject to the 2-year home residency requirement based on government funding or the skills list. If you are subject, it means you are not eligible to apply for H, L, or permanent residence visas/statuses or a change of status within the US, until you either fulfill the requirement (by spending an aggregate of two years in your home country) or obtain a waiver of the requirement. Do not apply for a waiver without first consulting the ISRC.

- 11. **English language:** English language proficiency is required to participate in the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program. Your Sponsor Department at NSU is responsible for attesting your language skills and ensure that you can understand and communicate effectively with your colleagues at Northwestern State University.
- 12. **Cross Cultural Activities:** As part of your Exchange program, it is expected that you actively participate in cross-cultural activities at Northwestern State University. Opportunities are available to you through programs sponsored by ISRC and do not require a large time commitment on your part.

Acknowledgement of Exchange Visitor:

I have read the NSU Pre-Arrival Information & Orientation for J-1 Exchange Visitors. I understand and will abide by all requirements of the NSU J-1 Exchange Visitor Program. I attest that I meet all of the stated requirements for the NSU J-1 Exchange Visitor Program. I attest that the information provided to you is accurate to the best of my knowledge. I further understand that falsification of information and failure to abide by the NSU J-1 Exchange Visitor Program rules may result in the termination of my visa, program, and employment with NSU. I understand that my participation in the NSU J-1 Exchange Visitor Program is not an employment contract or any other type of contract between myself and NSU. I further understand that my program can be modified or cancelled at any time, if deemed appropriate by the NSU.

J-1 Exchange Visitor Name (print) _____

Exchange Visitor Signature: _____

Date: _____ (mm/dd/yyyy)