

Coming to Columbia



*Essential Information for New
International Scholars*



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We at the International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO) on the Morningside campus and the International Affairs Office (IAO) on the Medical Center campus join with the faculty and staff in welcoming you to the University. Studying or working in a foreign country is both an exciting and a challenging experience. We offer this on-line guide to help you meet the challenge and enjoy the excitement of very dynamic environment

For many of you, this will be your first time in New York City. You will experience the unexpected, both because this is a different culture and because this is one of the largest and fastest-moving cities in the world. The staff of the ISSO and IAO is available to help you with immigration issues as well as everyday matters and problems. We work with close to eight thousand students and scholars from more than one hundred fifty five countries and are aware that adjustment to a new environment is neither easy nor the same for each person. We hope you will feel free to visit our offices and get to know us.

Coming to Columbia is designed to give you information that will be helpful from the time you receive a Certificate of Eligibility for either F-1 or J-1 student status through your first few weeks in New York as you settle in. It contains information about New York and Columbia you will need for planning before you leave your home country as well as what you need to know soon after your arrival.

Again, welcome to Columbia. We invite you to enjoy the richness of New York City and extend to you our best wishes for a successful scholarly experience.

About the ISSO

The ISSO serves the international students and scholars on the Morningside campus, including doctoral students in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences and students enrolled in the Mailman School of Public Health.

Walk-In Advisory Service - The ISSO offers full advisory services during its normal operating hours. No appointment is necessary. International students and scholars with questions or requests concerning visas, immigration, travel, employment, or other matters relating to their stay at Columbia are welcome to walk in to speak to a Program Officer. Program Officers and other staff members may also be reached by telephone and email for general inquiries and are available for appointments on an individual basis.

The ISSO Website and On-Line Calendar of Events -

Information about visa and immigration regulations, Columbia's international community and other related matters can be found on [the ISSO's](#) website. Our On-Line [Calendar of Events](#) offers detailed information about ISSO programs and workshops.

ISSOnews email broadcasts - Throughout the academic year, the ISSO provides regular email broadcast messages to international students. These messages, referred to as ISSOnews, are automatically distributed to currently-enrolled international students (i.e. not U.S. citizens or permanent residents) at Columbia. You are responsible for reading the ISSOnews, as it is our primary vehicle for distributing timely and important information concerning visa, immigration, and related matters. The messages also remind you of informational sessions, and social programs or cultural events taking place at Columbia and in NYC that may be of interest to you.

Walk-in Hours:

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday	9 am – 4 pm
Wednesday	10:30am – 4pm

Contact Information:

Location: 524 Riverside Drive in International House
North between 122nd Street and Tiemann Place

Mailing Address: 2960 Broadway, MC 5724
New York, NY 10027

Telephone: 212 854-3587
Facsimile: 212 851-1235
Website: <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/isso>
Email: newintlstudent@columbia.edu

About the IAO

The IAO serves the immigration-related needs of students and scholars at the Columbia University Medical Center (with the exception of students in the Mailman School of Public Health and GSAS, who are clients of the ISSO). Staff members of the IAO assist prospective and enrolled international students and scholars with initial and continuing visa documentation. Throughout the year the IAO sponsors informative programs and workshops. Monthly announcements, updating students on immigration issues and inviting them to join programs, workshops and activities are sent by the IAO. Students are also encouraged to take advantage of social, cultural, and other activities offered by the ISSO.

Walk-in Hours:

Monday - Friday	11am-5pm
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Location: Black Building
Room 1-126B

Contact Information:

Location: 650 West 168th St., Black Building
Room 1-126B
New York, NY 10032

**Mailing
Address:** 630 West 168th Street, Box 27
New York, NY 10032.

Telephone: 212 305-5455
Facsimile: 212 305-5208

Visa and Immigration Basics

Immigration Definitions for Scholars

The following terms and acronyms will be used frequently in Coming to Columbia and throughout your stay in the United States.

SEVIS – The Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) is a data collection and monitoring system that is used by U.S. academic institutions, DHS, and U.S. consulates and embassies. Certificates of Eligibility are generated through SEVIS, and schools make regular updates in SEVIS each semester recording students' full-time enrollment, changes of address, employment recommendations and changes to academic programs.

F-1 Student Status – The most common type of status used to study in the United States, it is available to all full-time degree and non-degree students who are admitted to the University and have demonstrated ability to finance their academic program.

J-1 Exchange Visitor Status – There are many categories of J-1, including a student category. To be eligible for the J-1 student category, over half of your funding must come from a source other than your personal or family funds. Common sources of funding for EVs include funding from a government, international organization or university. Students fully funded by Columbia would be eligible for J-1 status.

Certificate of Eligibility – This document certifies eligibility for F-1 or J-1 status. It is presented to the U.S. consulate to apply for a visa and to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) official when you enter the U.S. The Certificate of Eligibility is also referred to as the Visa Certificate, I-20 (for F-1 status), or DS-2019 (for J-1 status). Students are eligible for the Visa Certificate if they have been admitted to Columbia University, will study in F-1 or J-1 status, and have documented their ability to finance their education.

I-20 - The I-20 is a form issued by Columbia University for use in applying for the F-1 visa and entering the United States. The I-20 is issued to admitted students who have shown proof of their

ability to finance their academic program. It includes your biographical details and information on your source of funding and academic program. You must keep all I-20s that are issued to you. It is recommended that you also keep a copy of all I-20s for your records.

DS-2019 - The DS-2019 is a form issued by Columbia University, or other Exchange Visitor sponsoring organizations such as IIE or LASPAU, for use in applying for the J-1 visa and entering the United States. Fulbright scholars and other sponsored students will receive the DS-2019 from their sponsoring organization. The DS-2019 includes your biographical details and information on your source of funding and academic program. You must keep all DS-2019s that are issued to you. It is recommended that you also keep a copy of all DS-2019s for your records.

Passport – The passport is a document confirming your nationality issued by your country of citizenship. Passports must be valid for at least 6 months into the future at all times. If you will need to extend your passport, you must contact your country's consulate or embassy in the U.S.

Entry Visa – The entry visa is issued by a U.S. consulate or embassy and can be issued up to 120 days before the start date on the Certificate of Eligibility, but your admission to the U.S. is limited to 30 days in advance of the start date. The visa gives you permission to enter the United States, but does not determine how long you can stay. The length of the visa is determined by agreements between the U.S. and your home country and is not necessarily tied to the length of your program of study. The visa must be valid when you enter the U.S. and can only be renewed outside of the country. You are not required to have a valid visa to stay in the U.S., rather only to enter the country. Citizens of Canada and Bermuda do not require a visa to enter the U.S., but must present an I-20 or DS-2019 at the port of entry.

I-94 – The I-94 is a small white card that records your legal entry in to the U.S., your immigration status, and how long you can stay in the U.S. You complete it before seeing the immigration officer who processes it and gives you a portion of the form that s/he usually staples in your passport. The I-94 also records your arrivals and departures. Each time you leave the U.S., the I-94 is removed (unless you are traveling to Canada, Mexico, or the Caribbean). You receive a new one each time you enter the U.S. For as long as you are studying, you must have an I-94 that shows you are in either F-1 or J-1 status. Though the I-94 does not look important, it is one of the most important documents you have. It is recommended that you make a photocopy of both sides of the form each time you get a new one in the event that your original form is lost or damaged.

Immigration Status – Individuals in the U.S. can only have one status at a time. The status is noted on the I-94 card. If you have multiple visas in your passport, you must show the officer the F-1 or J-1 visa when you enter the country if you are planning to study.

Duration of Status (D/S) – Duration of status is the length of time you are permitted to remain in the U.S. Your duration of status includes the length of your academic program, plus any period of practical or academic training used after graduation, plus a grace period of 60 days for F-1 status and 30 days for J-1 status.

Acronyms

AT	Academic Training
AVC	Application for Visa Certificate
CBP	U.S. Customs and Border Protection
CPT	Curricular Practical Training
CUIT	Columbia University Information Technology
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DMV	Department of Motor Vehicles
DOS	Department of State
EV	Exchange Visitor
EAD	Employment Authorization Document
FINS	Fingerprint Identification Number
IAO	Immigration Affairs Office
ICE	U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
ISPN	International Spouse and Partner Network
ISSO	International Students and Scholar
NAFSA	Association of International Educators
NSEERS	National Security Entry and Exit Registration System
OCHA	Off Campus Housing Assistance
OPT	Optional Practical Training
POE	Port of Entry
SEAS	Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Science
SEVIS	Student and Exchange Visitor information System
SIPA	School of International and Public Affairs
SSA	Social Security Administration
SSN	Social Security Number
SSOL	Student Services On-Line
TA	Teacher's Assistant
USCBP	United States Customs and Border Protection
USCIS	United States Citizenship and Immigration Service
UNI	University Network ID

Differences between F-1 and J-1 Status

The most common reason students choose J-1 status are either because their sponsoring organization (i.e. the Royal Thai Government) requires them to have a J-1 visa or because they are married and want their spouse to be able to work in the United States. Important differences between F-1 and J-1 status are listed below.

Source of Funding – Individuals are eligible for J-1 status only if they are receiving more than 50% of their funding from a source other than personal or family funds. Such funding includes funding from the U.S. government or the student's home country government, an international organization, or the University.

Two-Year Home Residency Requirement – Students in J-1 status and their J-2 dependents might be subject to a "two-year home residency requirement". The two-year home residency requirement requires J-1 and J-2s to return to their home country for two years before they are eligible to enter the U.S. in H or L status or as a permanent resident. They are eligible to enter the U.S. again as J-1, as tourists or in any other status before satisfying the requirement.

Individuals are made subject to the two-year home residency requirement if they receive government funding from either the U.S. or their home country of if their field of study is listed in the J-1 Skills List. Each country selects fields for which personnel are considered in short supply and individuals studying in those fields and in J-1 status are subject to the two-year home residency requirement. Not all countries have a skills list. You can search the skills list online at travel.state.gov. There is no foreign residence requirement for F-1 students.

Medical Insurance – J-1 regulations require all J-1 and J-2 dependents to have medical insurance that meet certain requirements. The medical insurance offered by Columbia University covers all requirements for those in J-1 and J-2 status. Columbia's insurance plans tend to be significantly lower cost than other private insurance companies.

Work Permission – Both F-1 and J-1 students are permitted to work on-campus up to 20 hours per week during the semesters and full-time during university holidays. For off-campus employment, F-1 students are eligible for practical training while J-1 students are authorized for academic training.

Practical Training – Available to F-1 students after having completed two semesters as a full-time student for off-campus employment in their field of study. Curricular Practical Training can be used for required or course-based internships during the academic program in certain departments. F-1 students can have up to 12 months of Optional Practical Training for off-campus work during and/or after the completion of their degree

program.

Academic Training – Available to J-1 students after having completed one semester of full-time course work for off-campus employment that is integral to their course of study. All J-1 students are eligible for up to 18 months of Academic Training authorization or the length of their degree program, whichever is shorter, to be used during and/or after the completion of their degree program. J-1 students earning doctorates are eligible for up to 36 months of Academic Training authorization if the position requires a doctorate degree.

Dependent Employment – F-2 dependents are not eligible to work in the United States. J-2 spouses are eligible to apply for employment authorization from USCIS.

Dependent Study - F-2 dependents may take only 1 or 2 courses for recreational purposes and must change to F-1 status if they register full-time or in a degree program. J-2 dependents are eligible to study as they wish.

Message for Canadian Scholars

All regulations pertaining to F-1 and J-1 status apply to Canadian citizens. The only difference between the requirements for Canadian citizens and all other individuals in F-1 and J-1 status is that Canadians do not require visas from a U.S. Consulate to enter the United States.

While Canadian citizens do not need an entry visa to enter the United States, you must always present your passport and I-20 or DS-2019 to the DHS official when you enter the United States. On your first entry to the U.S., you will need to present the following documents: passport, I-20 or DS-2019, admission letter, proof of finances, receipt of the I-901 SEVIS fee payment. It is a violation of B-2 status to study in the United States, so it is important that you present these documents to the DHS official to get an I-94 for F-1 or J-1 status.

Persons entering the U.S. to work or to do research at Columbia should request the appropriate status (J-1, H-1 or O-1) at the border and must always show the Form DS-2019 or I-797 and supporting documentation to the immigration inspector. Otherwise, the scholar will be admitted in Tourist (B-2) status and will not be able to take advantage of the special benefits allowed those in J-1 or H-1, such as employment. More importantly, it is a violation of B-2 status to work in the United States. Canadian scholars must have an I-94 card to confirm current scholar status.

Other than applying for a visa, it is important that you read about and abide by all other provisions relating to scholar status.

How to Obtain J-1 Status

In order to be eligible for F-1 or J-1 student status to attend Columbia University, all students must first have been admitted to a full-time program and have received an I-20 or DS-2019 from the ISSO. Students attending Columbia must use an I-20 issued by Columbia or a DS-2019 issued by Columbia or a sponsoring organization such as the IIE. The requirements for obtaining status differ for students who are outside the U.S. and those who are already inside the U.S.

If you are outside the U.S

Once you have been issued your I-20 or DS-2019, all admitted students except Canadian citizens must apply for an F-1 or J-1 visa and enter the U.S. using that visa and the I-20 or DS-2019.

You must first apply at a [U.S. Consulate or Embassy](#) for an entry visa. You will need your visa certificate, Form DS-2019, and, of course, your country's passport. You may also need a little patience. Follow instructions given on the specific Consulate's website.

Please look at the Department of State's website on how to apply for a [J-1](#) visa for specific instructions. Also be sure to follow the State Department [Visa photo requirements](#). If your family name is different from that of your dependents, be prepared to show documents that prove your relationship.

Original documents will be necessary with your application for a visa. Consular standards for visa eligibility may be considerably more rigorous than the standards you must meet to qualify for a DS-2019. The consular officer will require you to provide the same (and possibly additional) financial documentation you provided Columbia University. You will be required to show this documentation again upon arrival in the United States at your port of entry.

On occasion, a consular officer may require evidence of English proficiency sufficient to pursue your proposed employment or program. Check directly with the consulate at which you plan to apply for your J-1 entry visa for application procedures. All applications must be made in person, and may cause unanticipated delays. The length of visa validity, number of entries permitted, and application fee are based on reciprocity and generally reflect your country's policies in granting visa privileges to visiting U.S. scholars. In the wake of the attacks of 9/11/01, the U.S. Department of State has put in place procedures that are currently causing severe delays in issuing visas. For more information, see the State Department's [Visa information](#) and [Potential Delays in Visa Issuance and at Ports of Entry](#).

Individual procedures and the amount of time required to obtain a visa vary from country to country. The consular officer has the final word on your application; his or her judgment is not subject to review. If, for any reason, you encounter difficulties, please contact the International Students and Scholars Office or the Immigration Affairs Office.

Applying for an F-1 or J-1 Entry Visa

Step 1: Check your I-20 or DS-2019. Check to see that all information is correct on your Visa Certificate. If you have informed us that your dependents will come with you to the U.S., they will each receive a visa certificate to apply for the F-2 or J-2 visa.

Step 2: Make an appointment. Instructions on how to make an appointment with the U.S. consulate closest to you and application requirements are available online at www.usembassy.gov. Do not make an appointment until you have received your Visa Certificate from the ISSO as it is required for the visa interview, and the ISSO cannot guarantee when it will arrive to you. For a list of approximate visa processing times, visit travel.state.gov. Note that the processing times do not include time that may be required for security clearances. Refer to: [Potential delays in Visa Issuance and at Ports of Entry](#) for more information regarding security clearances.

Step 3: Pay the I-901 SEVIS fee. The SEVIS fee is paid [online](#) and must be paid before you apply for your visa. The receipt is required for the visa interview and can only be printed at the time you pay the fee so be sure that the printer is working. The SEVIS ID number is located in the upper right corner of your I-20 or DS-2019. The I-901 fee is only paid for the F-1 or J-1 and is not required for dependents.

Step 4: Prepare for your appointment. The website for the consulate where you are applying will have a list of documents required to apply for the visa. Be sure to complete the required forms and pay the required fees prior to the appointment. F-1 and J-1 visas are non-immigrant visas. This means that you will have to demonstrate your intention to return to your home country following the completion of your studies. This can be shown by demonstrating strong family ties and explaining how your Columbia degree will help you with employment opportunities in your home country. The following websites have additional information and tips on how to prepare for your visa interview.

For more information on applying for a Visa:

http://travel.state.gov/visa/visa_1750.html

For Frequently Asked Questions about the SEVIS I-901

Fee <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/faq3.html>

For 10 Points to Remember when applying for a nonimmigrant visa see NAFSA's Resource Library:

<http://www.nafsa.org/resourcelibrary/default.aspx?id=8643>

Entering the United States

You may enter the U.S. up to 30 days before the start date listed on your Visa Certificate and are expected to arrive no later than the date listed. ICE has a useful Information Sheet entitled "Arrival at a US Port of Entry...What a Student or Exchange Visitor can Expect" highlighting the necessary steps and procedures you will face. It may be accessed at www.ice.gov/sevis/students/index.htm.

Step 1: Complete an I-94 card. Be sure to get a white I-94 from the flight attendant and not a green one. Green I-94s are for the visa waiver program only and cannot be used to obtain F-1 or J-1 status. Students arrive from Canada will complete the I-94 and go through immigration inspection in Canada before boarding the airplane or at a border post.

Step 2: Present your documents to the CBP Officer. Keep your passport and Visa Certificate in your carry-on bag. You will only have access to your checked luggage after you pass through immigration. When you meet the immigration officer, you will need to show him or her the following documents:

- Passport
- F-1 or J-1 visa
- I-20 or DS-2019
- I-94 card

You should also carry your admission letter, I-901 fee payment receipt, and your proof of finances with you when you enter the country. The officer might ask you for these documents when you enter the country, especially on your first entry. Canadian citizens must show all of the above documents except the visa. The officer will stamp your visa certificate and I-94 card for F-1 or J-1 "D/S", indicating that you now have F-1 or J-1 status in the United States. The officer will give you a portion of the I-94 card that s/he might staple in your passport as proof of your status. Be sure that your I-94 card indicates the proper status before exiting the immigration area.

Step 3: Report your arrival at the ISSO or IAO. The final step in ensuring your valid F-1 or J-1 status is to report your arrival to the ISSO or IAO. You will need to present your passport, I-94, and I-20 or DS-2019 to a Program Officer at the ISSO or IAO so they can report your arrival in SEVIS and activate your student record.

If you are Inside the U.S.

If you are inside the U.S. in a status other than F-1 or J-1 student - Admitted students already inside the U.S. in another status may either exit the U.S. and follow the procedures above to obtain F-1 or J-1 status or apply for a change of status within the United States. Individuals in B-1/B-2 or F-2 status are not permitted to study and must be in either F-1 or J-1 status before the start of the academic term. Not all individuals are eligible to

apply for a change of status, so it is important to speak with an ISSO advisor about your plans.

If you are inside the U.S. in F-1 or J-1 status at another institution - Admitted students inside the U.S. who are already in F-1 or J-1 status for study at another institution can request a transfer of their status from their current institution to Columbia. Note that individuals in J-1 status might not be eligible for a transfer and should consult with both ISSO and their current immigration sponsor. Transfer students should complete the [Online Application for Visa Certificate](#) and follow the instructions for submitting the supporting documentation. In addition, you must have the [Transfer-In Form](#) completed by the international student advisor at your current school and set a release date. The ISSO can only create the I-20 or DS-2019 for you after the release date has passed. After receiving the Visa Certificate, you will have to report to the ISSO to complete the transfer process.

Changing Status in the United States • *If you do not plan to leave the United States before beginning your work or research at Columbia and you are currently in an immigration status other than J-1, you will be required to change your status by application to the USCIS. Changing your status in the United States can be problematic, so please consult an ISSO (212-854-3587) or IAO adviser (212-305-5455) for more information.*

Continuing • *If you are in J-1 Researcher or Professor category and continuing your work or research at the University, the United States Department of State (DOS) Exchange Visitor Program must be informed. In order to extend your J-1 employment authorization and legal stay in the United States, your department initiates an application to the ISSO or the IAO. After the ISSO or the IAO receives the letter from your department and prepares a new DS-2019, you must bring your passport, I-94 card (and those of your accompanying dependents), and current DS-2019 to the ISSO or the IAO so that we may complete the procedure. Note that an extension of your program must be completed before the ending date on the current DS-2019 form. J-1 scholars are allowed to stay in this immigration status for three consecutive years. Refer to "Two Year Bar" below.*

Transferring Scholars • *As a J-1 Exchange Visitor in Researcher or Professor category you are allowed to stay in the United States for a maximum of five consecutive years. During this period you may transfer from one program sponsor to another within the same category of Researcher or Professor. The "responsible officer" of the program from which you are transferring needs to assign a transfer date in the SEVIS database before Columbia University is allowed to issue a new DS-2019 for transfer to Columbia. It is essential that the transfer of visa sponsorship be concluded before your authorized period*

of stay from your first program sponsor has expired. This is extremely important. Refer to "Two-Year Bar" below.

Two-Year Bar • *According to DOS regulations, a scholar (and any dependents) who has been in the United States in J-1 status (any category except short term scholar) within the last two years is not eligible for a new DS-2019 to return to the United States in J-1 status for two years, UNLESS it is for the purpose of a continuous extension of their status or a continuous transfer from one J-1 program to another. If you plan to leave the United States and return in the future as a J-1 researcher or professor, consult the ISSO or the IAO at least two months before the end date of the program in Section 3 of your DS-2019 to discuss the options available to you.*

If You Will Be Accompanied by Dependents• *If your dependents (spouse or unmarried children under twenty-one years of age) will accompany you to the United States or will be joining you shortly after your arrival, you will need to provide the ISSO or the IAO with additional documentation showing your ability to meet your dependents' expenses. Upon receipt of the required information we will send you the document needed by your dependents to apply for a visa.*

Transfer Procedures by Students in F-1 Status to Columbia University

If you are currently in F-1 status from another U.S. institution and intend to begin your studies at Columbia University, you are considered a "transfer student" by the ISSO for the purposes of issuing an I-20. A transfer of the supervision of your F-1 status from your old or current school to Columbia University is required by the DHS. You will be considered a transfer student if one of the following applies to you:

- You are in the middle of a degree program and are leaving that program to begin at Columbia.
- You are in the 3-2 engineering program.
- You will have completed a degree program at your current institution and will begin a new degree program at Columbia.
- You are currently authorized for OPT from another school and will begin a new degree program at Columbia.

Students doing a joint degree program between Columbia and an institution overseas are not considered transfer students by DHS.

There are three steps required to complete the transfer process. You are required to register for full-time studies at Columbia in the first available term after leaving your previous school or the first term after the summer vacation period. No "semester off"

between schools is allowed by the DHS except for the summer.

Step 1. Request transfer and submit documents to ISSO - Once you have learned of your admission to Columbia and have accepted the offer, you will need to complete the [Online Application for Visa Certificate](#) and submit the required documentation as explained in the AVC instructions. You will also need to notify your current international student advisor of your intention to transfer to Columbia.

Download the [Transfer-in form](#) and complete Section 1. You should bring this with you when you meet with your international student advisor. When you meet with the advisor, you will determine the “release date” of your SEVIS record so they can transfer your SEVIS record. The release date is the date that your SEVIS record will become available to the ISSO. The ISSO will not be able to issue your I-20 before the release date. The transfer-out procedure must be requested within 60 days of completing your program at your current school though the actual release date may be later. F-1 regulations allow a student to work in the summer between schools on the campus that maintains supervision of the SEVIS record so you may want to take this into consideration when choosing your release date. You should also consider any plans to travel outside the U.S. (i.e. if you have a release date of August 15 and are planning to re-enter the U.S. on August 20, this will not be enough time to get your I-20 to you before you return). Your international student advisor will complete Section 2 of the transfer-in form and return it to Columbia.

Step 2. Wait for your I-20 and prepare for arrival in New York - The ISSO will create your I-20 and send it to you. If you are traveling or moving during the break before coming to Columbia, remember to update the ISSO with your current address so the I-20 is sent to the correct location.

If you plan to travel outside the U.S. after completing your studies at your previous institution but before starting your program at Columbia, you must use Columbia's I-20 to re-enter the U.S. If you have a valid, unexpired F-1 visa in your passport, you do not need to apply for a new visa. You may use the visa you have, even though the previous school's name is on it. If your visa has expired, you will need to apply for a new F-1 visa at the consulate; however, you are not required to pay the SEVIS fee. For confirmation that you do not need to pay the SEVIS fee, visit [USICE](#)

If you are not planning to leave the U.S. before arriving at Columbia, you will simply receive the I-20 and report to the ISSO upon arrival.

Step 3. Complete the Transfer Process - Upon arriving in New York, you must report to the ISSO to complete the transfer process. We recommend that you come to complete the transfer as soon as you arrive in New York. You are required to report to

the ISSO no later than 15 days past the start date on your I-20. If you fail to report within this time frame, you will be in violation of your F-1 status. When you come to report to the ISSO, you should bring your passport, I-94 card, and I-20 from Columbia.

J-1 Arrival on Campus: Reporting to the ISSO

SEVIS Registration Requirement

Shortly after your arrival in New York, you must report to the ISSO with your documents. The ISSO must update your SEVIS record with a NY-area address (even if it's temporary) and change your status from “initial” to “active”. This is EXTREMELY IMPORTANT and must take place within 30 days of your program start date, or your SEVIS record will automatically be “terminated” and you will be out of status.

Background • All prospective scholars coming in J-1 status have been issued the relevant documentation through a database referred to as SEVIS, an acronym for the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System. This was designed by the government as both a data collection and a tracking system that creates an interface between institutions of higher education, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), consulates and embassies abroad, and ports of entry. Schools are required to make regular electronic updates in SEVIS throughout the academic year on the records of their enrolled students and scholars in F-1 and J-1 status—and their dependents. Information to be updated includes, but is not limited to, enrollment status, changes in address, changes in level of study, employment recommendations, and school transfers.

When you arrive at a US port of entry, the immigration inspector will update your SEVIS record with information about your arrival. The school (or agency, in the case of some J-1 scholars) that issued your document will receive an electronic notification of your arrival. Your status in SEVIS is “initial”, but must be changed to “active” within 30 days of the program start date in order for your SEVIS record to remain valid.

How to Obtain H-1 or O-1 Immigration Status at Columbia

Canadian Nationals • Please note that Canadians do not need entry visas to enter the United States. Those entering the United States to work should request the appropriate status (H-1, O-1) at the border once an I-797 approval notice has been received from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Otherwise, you will be in Tourist (B-2) status and cannot be employed at Columbia University. Canadians must have an I-94 card to confirm current H-1 or O-1 status, which is given by an immigration official at the time of entry into the United States.

If You are Outside the United States

You must first apply at a [U.S. Consulate or Embassy](#) for an entry visa. Applicants for an H-1 or O-1 visa will need their country's passport and the original Form I-797 approval notice or a cable sent to the consulate stating that the requested status has been approved. You may also need a little patience.

Please look at the Department of State's website on how to apply for a [worker visa](#) for specific instructions. Also be sure to follow the State Department [Visa photo requirements](#). If your family name is different from that of your dependents, be prepared to show documents that prove your relationship.

Original documents will be necessary with your application for an entry visa. The consular officer will require you to provide the same (and possibly additional) financial documentation you provided Columbia University. You will be required to show this documentation again upon arrival in the United States at your port of entry.

On occasion, a consular officer may require evidence of English proficiency sufficient to pursue your proposed employment. . Check directly with the consulate at which you plan to apply for your entry visa for application procedures. All applications must be made in person, and may cause unanticipated delays. The length of visa validity, number of entries permitted, and application fee are based on reciprocity and generally reflect your country's policies in granting visa privileges to visiting U.S. citizens. For more information, see the State Department's [Visa Information](#) and [Potential Delays in Visa Issuance and at Ports of Entry](#).

Individual procedures and the amount of time required to obtain a visa vary from country to country. The consular officer has the final word on your application; his or her judgment is not subject to review. If, for any reason, you encounter difficulties, please contact the International Students and Scholars Office or the Immigration Affairs Office.

If You are Already in the United States

Changing Status in the United States • If you do not plan to leave the United States before beginning your work or research at Columbia and you are changing status to H or O, an application must be made in your behalf by the academic department to the ISSO or the IAO, which will file a change of status application with the DHS.

Continuing • If you are in H or O status, an application to DHS similar to the initial application for this status must be filed. The scholar's department initiates this application to DHS through the International Students and Scholars Office or the Immigration Affairs Office. The application to extend your status should begin six months before the expiration of your current H or O status. H-

1 scholars are allowed to stay in that classification for a maximum of six years. The O-1 classification has no maximum period of stay.

Transferring Scholars • Those in H or O status must complete an application to DHS similar to the initial application for this status. The scholar's department initiates this application to DHS through the International Students and Scholars Office or the Immigration Affairs Office. H-1 scholars are allowed to stay in that classification for a maximum of six years. The O-1 classification has no maximum period of stay.

Potential Delays in Visa Issuance and at Ports of Entry

Heightened security measures instituted since September 11, 2001 have resulted in delays in visa issuance abroad—regardless of whether you are applying for first or subsequent student visas in the F or J classification.

Security checks and visa interview requirements may cause delays. The DOS information on non-immigrant visas and its link to consular posts at www.usembassy.gov may be good sources of current information. .

Technologies Alert List and Sensitive Areas of Study - Students, faculty and researchers who are considered to be studying, researching or teaching sensitive areas as determined by the U.S. government may be required to undergo security clearances before a visa can be issued. There is a document called the "Technology Alert List" that visa officers consult for this purpose. China, India, Israel, Pakistan and Russia have received special mention by the U.S. State Department in the context of this list because these countries are considered to possess nuclear capability that is of concern to U.S. national security. However, even if you are not a citizen of one of the countries listed above, your field of study (especially if it is in the sciences, technology or engineering) might require your visa application to undergo a security clearance.

Name Check by DOS and DHS – Name checks are conducted by DOS and DHS every time you apply for a visa or enter the country. This name check has recently resulted in unexpected and severe problems for non-immigrants, some arising from previous overstays, others from discovery of a record of illegal activity in the United States, and others because of mistaken name matches with listings in the database.

Special Registration Procedures for Certain Foreign Nationals – Since September 11, 2002, certain non-immigrants are required to be fingerprinted and photographed at U.S. ports of entry and check in with DHS at airports and borders prior to exiting the

country. Currently, the published registration rule applies without exception to nationals or citizens of Iran, Iraq, Libya, Syria and Sudan. This list is subject to change at any time, and registration may be required of non-immigrants of any nationality who are deemed by a consular officer or CBP officer to require closer monitoring. More information can be found on the [ice.gov](https://ice.dhs.gov) website when your search for “Special Registration”.

Dependents

Dependent status is available to the spouses and children under the age of 21 of students in F-1 and J-1 status. Dependents would hold F-2 and J-2 status respectively. F-2 dependent records can be created at any time during the academic program. J-2 dependent records can also be added at any time during the academic program with one exception – they cannot be added after a J-1 visa has been issued at the consulate and before the J-1 record is activated. The dependents’ purpose of stay in the U.S. is to accompany the “principal alien”, the F-1 or J-1 student, and their status is dependent upon yours.

In order to have a dependent visa certificate created, the student has to provide documentation showing available funds to cover the living expenses of their dependents. Dependent living expenses are estimated at \$800 per month for a spouse (\$9,600 per year) and \$400 per child per month (\$4,800 per child per year). A copy of each dependent’s passport must also be provided.

Individuals in F-2 status are not permitted to work in the United States. F-2 spouses and children attending post-secondary education are not permitted to study in F-2 status and would be required to change to F-1 status for full-time study. F-2 children enrolled in primary and secondary school are permitted to study.

J-2 dependents can study part-time or full-time without changing status and are eligible to apply for employment authorization from the USCIS.

The ISSO runs an International Spouse and Partner Network (ISPN) through which spouses and partners of students and scholars can meet others in similar situations. See Family Matters for more information.

Domestic Partners – F-2 and J-2 dependent status is only available to spouses and children of F-1 and J-1 students. Domestic partners are not eligible for dependent status but can apply for a B-1/B-2 visa to accompany the student. Though B-2 visits are usually for short periods of time, it is permissible for the partner to accompany the student for the duration of a study program in the US. The accompanying partner must demonstrate intent to depart the U.S. at the conclusion of the student’s authorized stay. The most recent documentation

issued by the Department of State confirming the proper use of the B-1/B-2 visa for this purpose was issued in a [cable in July 2001](#).

Immigration Regulations Governing Your Stay

Your Legal Obligations

It is your responsibility to maintain your status with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). That is, you are responsible for finding out, knowing, and following pertinent regulations. If you take time early on to familiarize yourself with your obligations to the DHS, you should find it easy to maintain your legal status. If, however, you allow yourself to become “out of status,” you may be subject to serious repercussions that may impede your ability to return to the United States in future years.

If you have any questions you should consult the staff of the ISSO or the IAO. Every effort has been made to provide reliable and accurate information on rules that govern scholar immigration classifications. When regulations change—as is frequently the case—the ISSO or the IAO will have up-to-date information. Come in and ask questions anytime. As your visa sponsor, Columbia University has legal obligations that are met by the ISSO or the IAO.

Maintaining Legal J-1 Scholar Status

The guidelines listed below apply to individuals in J-1 status in the category of Research Scholar or Professor. If you follow them, you should have few problems maintaining your immigration status.

- 1. Keep your passport valid.** Refer again to “Immigration Definitions”.
- 2. Never stay in the United States beyond the permissible time.** In J-1 status there is a “grace period” of thirty days in which to prepare for departure beyond the completion date on the form DS-2019. However, if you complete your purpose for being in J status earlier than the indicated date, you must leave the United States earlier. It may also be possible to apply for a change of status to another immigration status within the appropriate time allowed, if eligible.
- 3. Accept no employment of any kind, either on or off campus, without written permission from the International Students and Scholars Office or the Immigration Affairs Office.** Working without proper authorization is considered to be the most serious violation of non-immigrant status. If you refer to

your I-94 you will see the statement “Warning—a nonimmigrant who accepts unauthorized employment is subject to deportation.” It is most important, therefore, that you consult with the ISSO or the IAO before you accept an offer of employment or begin to work. Refer to [Employment for J-1](#) Scholars. We will advise you whether it is possible for you to work and assist you with the appropriate documents. Please bear in mind that it is illegal to begin to work in anticipation of being granted permission to do so; you must have permission first.

4. Have medical insurance at all times. Regulations require those in J status to have very comprehensive medical insurance covering the scholar and all dependents. Refer to [Health Insurance for J-1 Scholars](#) for more information about complying with these requirements.

5. Notify the appropriate office if there is any change in address.

If you are in J-1 status, complete the on-line [address change form](#) in order for the ISSO to notify SEVIS, the DHS database. If you are under the sponsorship of an Exchange Visitor Program other than Columbia, such as CIES, you must notify them directly of any address change.

6. Obtain extensions, as needed, of your permission to stay in the United States. Those in J-1 immigration status are admitted to the United States for “duration of status”, or D/S. The completion date in section 3 on the DS-2019 represents the period of time for which you are employed at Columbia or for which you have been designated a Scholar. If you require and are eligible for additional time, you will need to apply for an extension with your visa sponsor (the ISSO or the IAO for Columbia-sponsored scholars—IIE, Amideast, Laspau, etc. for others). Your department should request the extension from the ISSO or the IAO at least ninety days before the completion date on your DS-2019. If eligible, we will update your SEVIS record and issue a new DS-2019 form. This MUST be done BEFORE the current form expires.

7. Inform the ISSO or the IAO of the intention to transfer your J-1 sponsorship to another institution in a timely manner. As a J-1 Exchange Visitor in the Research Scholar or Professor category, you are allowed to stay in the United States for a maximum of five consecutive years. During this period you may transfer from one program sponsor to another within the same category, consistent with the original objectives in coming to the U.S. as a J-1 Exchange Visitor. The “responsible officer” of the program from which you are transferring needs to assign a “transfer out” date in the SEVIS database on which the next school will gain access to your record to issue a new DS-2019 for transfer. It is essential that the transfer of visa sponsorship be concluded BEFORE the authorized period of stay from your first program sponsor has expired.

8. If there are any changes contemplated to your employment or program, e.g. salary, title or rank, completion date, funding, department, or immigration status, you must notify the ISSO or the IAO immediately.

Additionally, if you are leaving Columbia earlier than the completion date on your DS-2019 form, you must inform the ISSO or IAO.

How to Maintain Legal H-1 or O-1 Status in the United States

1. Keep your passport valid. Refer again to “Immigration Definitions”.

2. Notify the appropriate office if there is any change in address. All non-immigrants are required to notify the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) within 10 days of a change of address. If you are in H-1 or O-1 status, notification is accomplished by completing Form AR-11, downloadable from [www.uscis.gov](#), and mailing the completed form to USCIS. It is advisable to send the AR-11 by certified mail, return receipt requested.

3. Accept no employment of any kind other than that which is authorized by your H-1 or O-1 petition. H-1 and O-1 status are employer-specific and, as such, do not allow you to accept compensation, including honoraria, from any other entity. You may have more than one employer at the same time, but each employer must file an H-1 or O-1 petition for you.

4. Never stay in the United States beyond the date shown on your I-94 card. Keep in mind, however, that your status is dependent upon your continued employment. This means that if you complete your purpose for being in H or O status earlier than the date indicated on the I-94 card, you are no longer maintaining your status and must leave the United States earlier. There is no grace period for H-1 and O-1 status.

Two exceptions that allow you to remain in the United States with an expired I-94 card are :

when a timely petition to extend your H-1 or O-1 status has been filed and the petition is pending with USCIS.

when a timely application for a change of status has been filed and is pending with USCIS. A change of status must be filed before the current status expires. This allows you to remain in the U.S. after the I-94 card expires while the application is pending, but does not allow you to work during this time.

5. Obtain extensions, as needed, of your permission to stay and work in the United States.

H-1B1: Those in H-1B1 status are allowed to stay a total of six years* in H status but will be approved for a maximum of only three years at a time. The earliest a petition to extend H-1 status can be filed is six months in advance of the expiration of the

current approved petition. Departments are advised to apply for the extension early on as processing time by USCIS cannot be predicted or guaranteed. The H-1 petition for extension is the same as the original, except that you do not need to include documentation relating to other non-immigrant status(es) you may have held prior to H-1, and that all prior H-1 approval notices (form I-797) should be included. If you have any dependents with you in H-4 status, they must have their status extended as well. An additional form I-539, and fee, must be included with your extension petition.

If a timely extension is filed (i.e. before the expiration of the current status), regulations allow individuals in H-1 status to continue to work for the same employer for up to 240 days while the extension petition is pending at USCIS. You will need to complete a new I-9 form with your department manager so that your salary is not interrupted.

O-1: O status can initially be granted for three years and can be renewed indefinitely in one-year increments by application to USCIS. The earliest a petition to extend O-1 status can be filed is six months in advance of the expiration of the current approved petition. Departments are advised to apply for the extension early on as processing time by USCIS cannot be predicted or guaranteed. The O-1 petition for extension does not need to include all the same documentation as required by the original. You should, however, update your C.V. and publications list, and include copies of one or two new publications, if available. If you have any dependents with you in O-3 status, they must have their status extended as well. An additional form I-539, and fee, must be included with your extension petition.

6. Have an H-1 or O-1 petition filed by each concurrent or subsequent employer. Since H-1 status and O-1 status are employer-specific, an H-1B or O-1 petition approved for Columbia cannot be used to work anywhere else. A subsequent employer must also file an entire, new petition for you.

There is a "portability" provision in H-1 regulations which allows an applicant who is already in H1B status to begin working at the new employer as soon as that employer receives a notice of receipt for their H1B petition from the USCIS. This means that employment can begin before the processing and approval of the petition is complete. Portability does NOT apply to O-1 status. An individual in O-1 status must wait for the subsequent employer's O-1 petition to be approved before they can begin to work there.

7. If there are any changes contemplated to your employment or program, e.g. salary, title or rank, funding, department, or immigration status, you must notify the ISSO or the IAO immediately.

Also, the ISSO needs to be informed if you are leaving Columbia before the completion date of your approved petition.

8. Columbia-sponsored H-1 visitors may engage in clinical research and patient care services ONLY if DHS has been notified and licensure and exam requirements have been met.

Contact the IAO for further information.

Employment for J-1 Scholars

If a scholar is sponsored by Columbia University's J-1 Exchange Visitor Program as a *Professor* or *Research Scholar* (see category indicated on the DS-2019, section 4), the scholar may apply for employment authorization in certain circumstances.

The most common employment authorization is that indicated on the DS-2019 issued by Columbia University which is used to enter the United States or to transfer from another program within the United States. This employment authorization requires a **University appointment** (i.e. Visiting Professor of Chemistry, Postdoctoral Research Scientist/Scholar in Microbiology) and is indicated on the DS-2019, with funding included in section 5.

Occasional Lectures or Consultations, either at Columbia University or elsewhere, must be authorized **in advance** of accepting the employment and must be in writing. The employment may be authorized if the proposed employment meets the following criteria:

- is directly related to the objectives of the Exchange Visitor's Program
- is incidental to the primary program activities
- will not delay the completion of the Exchange Visitor's Program

To obtain authorization for such incidental employment, the scholar should present the following documents to the International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO):

- **A letter from the prospective employer** describing the terms and conditions of the proposed employment, including the duration, number of hours, field of study, amount of compensation, and a description of the activity for which the scholar is being hired.
- **A letter from the department head or academic sponsor** which includes the following:
 1. refers to the letter from the proposed employer
 2. confirms that the proposed employment is directly related to the scholar's principal reason for being at Columbia University, is indeed incidental, and will not delay completion of the program

3. explains how the proposed employment would enhance the scholar's Exchange Visitor Program
4. recommends approval of the proposed employment

- **DS-2019**
- **Passport and I-94 card**

Employment other than that defined by the University appointment held by a scholar must be authorized. The scholar must receive written authorization from the designated Responsible Office of the J-1 Program if a specific opportunity is approved. In the case of a Columbia University DS-2019, employment must be authorized by the ISSO.

Note: Visiting scholars/scientists (i.e. those designated by the Provost's Office and without a University appointment) may not be employed at Columbia University. However, a visiting scholar/scientist may, under certain circumstances, give up this designation and hold a University appointment, thereby allowing the scholar to be employed by Columbia University.

Employment Authorization for Dependents in J-2 Status

Eligibility: Dependents of J-1 Exchange Visitors in J-2 visa status are eligible to apply to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for employment authorization. Bear in mind that J-2 dependents are NOT permitted to work or to receive a US Social Security Number until they have received an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card from the USCIS. Expect the processing time for the EAD to be at least two to three months.

How long may I work? J-2 dependents with employment authorization may work until the date on the EAD card or until the J-1 principal visitor completes his or her program, whichever is earlier. J-2 dependents may apply to renew work authorization, as long as the J-1 visitor remains in status. If the J-1 receives an extension of stay, the J-2 dependent must re-apply for work authorization once the extension has been granted. We recommend that applications for extensions of the EAD be made at least 3 months in advance of the expiration date on the card.

May I still work if the status of the J-1 ends? If the J-1 visitor discontinues the program at Columbia or changes to another visa category, the work authorization for the J-2 dependent will be withdrawn. Legal work authorization for J-2 dependents is always dependent on the status of the J-1 principal.

How do I apply? A complete application must include all of the following:

Refer to the ISSO Website: (http://www.columbia.edu/cu/isso/faculty/J_dpt_mgr/J-2_employment_authorization.html)

Employment for H-1 Temporary Workers and O-1 Aliens of Extraordinary Ability

H-1 status is for temporary workers in a specialty occupation. The applicant for H-1 status must have a bachelor's degree equivalent or higher and the position that he/she will accept must require a bachelor's degree equivalent or higher. Columbia University petitions on behalf of each applicant for a specific position. Because the petition is specific to the employment, those granted H-1 status may work only for the employer who filed the petition and only in the position for which the petition was filed. If there is a substantial change in this position, a completely new H-1 petition may be required.

Temporary workers with H-1 status may not accept employment at any other institution unless that institution files an H-1 petition for concurrent employment. This means that H-1 workers may not accept any other offers of employment, including fees for consultations or lectures at other universities, without specific authorization. Please direct any questions to the International Students and Scholars Office or the Immigration Affairs Office.

O-1 status is also employer specific. Those in O-1 status may not accept employment at any other institution unless that institution files an O-1 petition for concurrent employment. This means that O-1 workers may not accept any other offers of employment, including fees for consultations or lectures at other universities, without specific authorization. Please direct any questions to the International Students and Scholars Office or the Immigration Affairs Office.

Dependent Employment

DHS regulations do not permit the spouse (H-4) of an H-1 Temporary Worker or the spouse (O-3) of an O-1 principal to apply for work permission.

On-Campus Employment

Students in F-1 and J-1 status are eligible to work on-campus for up to 20 hours per week during the semesters and full-time during university holidays. On-campus employment is defined as work done for and paid by Columbia University, or work at a University location with an employer that is providing services to students, such as the Columbia Bookstore that is run by Barnes and Noble. You may have more than one position on-campus as long as the number of hours you work does not exceed 20. J-1 students sponsored by another organization, i.e. IIE or LASPAU, must receive a letter from their sponsoring organization to work at Columbia.

Some on-campus jobs are listed on LionShare through the [Center for Career Education](#). You may also contact your academic departments for information on teaching or research assistant positions. International students are not eligible for federally funded Work-Study positions, as these positions are reserved for U.S. citizen or permanent resident students who were awarded Work-Study funding as part of their financial aid package. Offices that hire non-Work-Study positions include the University Libraries, CUIT, and the Columbia University Tutoring and Translation Agency.

Off-Campus Work Options

F-1 Status

Off-campus work is possible only after you have been in the United States in valid student status for one academic year (two semesters). Such work authorization always required written permission, either from the ISSO or USCIS. To acquaint you with the options, here is an overview. There is time for detailed procedures later on.

Optional Practical Training (OPT) - OPT authorization permits you to work anywhere in the United States in a position related to your field of study. All F-1 students are eligible for 12 months of OPT for each academic level (i.e. Bachelor's, Master's, Doctorate) that can be used during and/or after your studies. While in school, you can apply for OPT to work up to 20 hours per week during semesters and full-time during University holidays. OPT is recommended by the ISSO and requires an application to USCIS.

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) – Not all students are eligible for CPT. Students in programs that require an internship or practicum or programs that have an internship or practicum elective listed in the University bulletin might be eligible for CPT authorization. CPT is authorized by the ISSO. Students in SIPA, Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia Business School, and some programs in other schools are eligible for CPT. There is no CPT available in the undergraduate curriculum.

CPT permits work up to 20 hours per week during the semesters and full-time during University holidays. Time authorized for CPT does not count toward the 12-month limit for OPT.

Unforeseen Financial Hardship - If after you have completed one academic year, you experience severe financial difficulties that were unforeseen at the start of your program, you may request authorization for off-campus work from USCIS. If granted, it is possible to work up to 20 hours per week during the academic year and full-time during summer and vacation periods. In the application, you must establish and document the fact that unforeseen changes that severely affect your financial resources have occurred since you initially qualified for F-1

status. This type of employment does not count toward the 12-month limit for OPT.

Internship with an International Organization - Students offered a position with an international organization, i.e. the World Bank, or the United Nations, can apply for work authorization from USCIS. You may apply for this type of employment before you have completed one academic year of study and may work full-time both during semesters and university holidays. This type of employment does not count toward the 12-month limit for OPT.

J-1 Status

There are two types of employment authorization for students in J-1 status: Academic Training (AT) and permission to work due to unforeseen financial hardship.

Academic Training (AT) - AT is defined as "employment integral to an exchange visitor's academic program". J-1 students sponsored by Columbia University are eligible for up to 18 months of AT authorization or the length of their degree program, whichever is shorter. If you have a grant or scholarship, the scholarship agreement you signed might limit the length of AT for which you are eligible, i.e. students receiving funding from the Open Society Institute. Students earning doctorate degrees might be eligible for up to 36 months of AT authorization. AT can be used during and/or after the academic program and can be authorized after you have completed one semester as a full-time student in J-1 status. AT authorization is granted by the J-1 student's program sponsor in the form of a letter. If your DS-2019 is issued by ISSO, Columbia will authorize you for AT. If your DS-2019 was issued by another organization, you must get information on applying for AT from your program sponsor.

Unforeseen Financial Hardship - If, after one academic year as a full-time student in J-1 status, you experience extreme financial difficulties that were unforeseen when you started the academic program, you may apply for off-campus work permission from your program sponsor. In your application, you must establish and document the fact that unforeseen changes that severely affect your financial resources have occurred. If granted, you can work up to 20 hours per week during the academic year and full-time during the summer and vacation periods.

J-1 Exchange Visitor Travel Regulations

When leaving the U.S. temporarily during your program of study at Columbia, you will need to have the necessary documents to both permit entry to another country as well as to permit re-entry to the U.S. in J-1 student status. For travel to a country other than the home country, students should check with the consulates of the country they wish to visit for specific entry

requirements. A list of consulates in Manhattan can be found at <http://www.citidex.com/252.htm>.

To travel outside the U. S. and return to the U. S. during your approved appointment period, you must:

Carry a passport that will be valid for at least 6 months into the future from the day you return from your trip abroad.

Have your form DS-2019 recertified as needed.

Your DS-2019 must be recertified once a year, for the length of the DS-2019. If you are traveling, your annual recertification should be done before your departure.

In order for your form DS-2019 to be recertified, you must maintain an affiliation with Columbia University and provide financial documentation covering all expenses for one year for both you and your dependents. Request recertification of your DS-2019 from the International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO) or the Immigration Affairs Office (IAO) at least five business days before you plan to leave.

Have an unexpired J-1 entry visa stamp valid for further entries in your passport.

Obtaining a new visa stamp: If you visit countries outside the U. S. other than Canada, the Caribbean (with the current exceptions of Cuba and Bermuda), or Mexico, you must have a valid J-1 entry visa stamp in your passport in order to return to the U. S. This is essential in addition to having a form DS-2019. If your visa is no longer valid, you must take your passport and DS-2019 to the nearest U. S. consulate or embassy in the country you are visiting to apply for a new visa stamp. Evidence of financial support for your stay in the U. S. must also be presented when applying for a visa. If you have ever stayed in the U. S. beyond the date of your authorized permission to stay, you may not be able to obtain a visa in any country but your country of citizenship or permanent residence. If you believe that this restriction applies to you, please consult the ISSO or IAO before leaving the country.

There are a number of factors that may contribute to delays in having a visa issued to study in the United States. Heightened security measures instituted since September 11, 2001 have resulted in delays in visa issuance abroad—regardless of whether you are applying for first or subsequent student visas in the F classification. Security checks for those whose field of research or study is deemed to be "sensitive", interview requirements for almost all non-immigrant visa applicants, and problems in transfer of data in SEVIS are causing extended delays. The Department of State's (DOS) web information on [non-immigrant visas](#) and its link to individual [consular](#) posts

may be good sources of current information. For more detailed information, refer to Potential Delays in Visa Issuance.

Carry a recent letter stating that you are currently affiliated with Columbia University, your title, your duties, and your salary or your Visiting Scholar/Scientist Designation letter from the ISSO.

J-1 Dependents Traveling Alone

Dependents of J-1s must obtain an DS-2019 for J-2 before traveling abroad, if they will be returning to the U.S. unaccompanied by the J-1 principal. The DS-2019 issued to dependents is a replication of the J-1's DS-2019 annotated as being for use by dependents. Dependents must carry documentation showing sufficient funds to cover expenses (as shown on the DS-2019). Dependents wishing to return to the U.S. in J-2 immigration status may not be permitted to return unless the J-1's DS-2019 is valid at the time of the dependent's return. Otherwise, documentary requirements are the same as those for holders of J-1 visas.

Travel to Canada, the Caribbean (except Cuba and Bermuda), or Mexico

If you are traveling only to Canada, Mexico, or the Caribbean (except Cuba and Bermuda) for fewer than thirty days, you may not need to obtain a new visa stamp to return to the U.S. To qualify for this privilege, you must:

Be in lawful J-1 status

Have an unexpired I-94 card with you when you return. Do not surrender it when you leave the U.S. If you do, you will need a valid entry visa to re-enter the U. S.

Have a passport valid at least 6 months into the future on the day you return.

Travel only to one of the destinations named above and for fewer than 30 days. For example, you cannot use revalidation to enter Canada, depart to another country, return to Canada and then return to the US within 30 days.

Not apply for a visa while in Canada, Mexico, or the Caribbean. If you apply for a visa while in Canada, Mexico, or the Caribbean, you must wait for it to be issued before you return. If your visa application is denied, you are not allowed to use "automatic revalidation" to return to the U.S. and must travel to your country of citizenship to apply for a new visa.

Have a current DS-2019 in your possession.

Have a J-1 visa (expired or valid) in your passport that matches the immigration status described by your I-94 card.

If you have changed your non-immigrant status in the U.S., the visa in your passport probably corresponds to your previous non-immigrant status. You may use this visa to enter - even though it is for a different non-immigrant status- when entering the U.S. after less than 30 days in Canada, Mexico, or the Caribbean (except Cuba and Bermuda).

Be a citizen of a country other than Syria, Iran, Iraq, Sudan, North Korea, or Libya. If you are a citizen of Syria, Iran, Iraq, Sudan, North Korea, or Libya you do not qualify for this privilege. You are required to present all documents described in this section, including a valid visa for your current status.

H-1B and O-1 Travel Regulations

When leaving the U.S. temporarily during your program of study at Columbia, you will need to have the necessary documents to both permit entry to another country as well as to permit re-entry to the U.S. in J-1 student status. For travel to a country other than the home country, students should check with the consulates of the country they wish to visit for specific entry requirements. A list of consulates in Manhattan can be found at [citidex](#). You should check the US [Consulates](#) abroad website before you go to determine the current procedures in place for obtaining a visa. Recent regulations have caused considerable changes to these procedures.

To travel outside the U. S. and return to the U. S. during your approved appointment period, you must:

Carry a passport that will be valid for at least 6 months into the future from the day you return.

Have a valid H-1B or O-1 entry visa stamp in your passport (unless you are a Canadian citizen).

If you do not have an H-1B or O-1 visa, you must obtain it at the U. S. consulate in the country you are visiting. Refer to the U.S. Department of State Web site for information on obtaining a visa in the U.S. If you have ever stayed in the U. S. beyond the date of your authorized permission to stay, you may not be able to obtain a visa in any country other than your country of citizenship or permanent residence. If you believe this restriction applies to you, please consult the ISSO or IAO before leaving the country.

There are a number of factors that may contribute to delays in having a visa issued to study in the United States. Heightened security measures instituted since September 11, 2001 have resulted in delays in visa issuance abroad—regardless of whether you are applying for first or subsequent student visas in the F classification. Security checks for those whose field of research or study is deemed to be "sensitive", interview requirements for almost all non-immigrant visa applicants, and problems in transfer of data in SEVIS are causing extended delays. The Department of State's (DOS) web information on non-immigrant visas at <http://travel.state.gov/visa/tempvisitors.html> and its link to individual consular posts at <http://usembassy.state.gov/> may be

good sources of current information. For more detailed information, refer to Potential Delays in Visa Issuance.

Carry the original Form I-797 which shows your H-1B or O-1 approval for Columbia University. If you do not have it, please request it from the ISSO or the IAO. Do not give the original I-797 to the Consulate when applying for a visa. Bring the original to present to the consular officer but leave only a copy of the I-797 with your application. You may need the original I-797 in the future and it is extremely difficult to replace.

Have a letter from your department that confirms your salary and employment dates.

Have your original I-94 card.

If you entered the U. S. in H-1B or O-1 status, you should have a separate I-94 card. The I-94 card will be taken from you upon departure from the U. S. and you will receive a new one upon your return.

If you do not have a valid H-1B or O-1 visa (and are not a Canadian citizen), you will need to apply for a visa at a U. S. Consulate overseas. You will need items 1,3, & 4 above. Remember, it is easiest to obtain a visa in your home country. If you have ever stayed beyond the date allowed in the U. S., you may be required to go to your country of citizenship or permanent residence in order to obtain a visa for the U. S. Do not give the original I-797 to the Consulate when applying for a visa. Bring the original to present to the consular officer but leave only a copy of the I-797 with your application. You may need the original I-797 in the future and it is extremely difficult to replace.

If you are traveling to a country other than that of your citizenship (commonly called a "third country"), always call the U. S. Consulate in that country before leaving to determine what the procedures and time-frame for obtaining a visa, as each Consulate may request different documents to issue the visa. If difficulty in obtaining the visa is foreseen, you may wish to have the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) attest to your H-1B or O-1 status in the U. S. by requesting a cable to be sent to the U. S. consulate in the third country. This is done by filing an I-824 Request for Consulate Notification, which must be filed by Columbia University. Please contact the ISSO or the IAO for cost and details.

If you already have a H-1B or O-1 visa stamp in your passport, but need it renewed in order to return to the U.S. AND you are traveling overseas for a short period of time and are worried that you will not have time to obtain a new visa, you may apply for a visa revalidation through the State Department in Washington D.C. approximately one and one half months in advance of your departure. Detailed instructions are below. Revalidation of H-1B or O-1 Visa - If you already have received an H-1B or O-1 visa that has currently expired, you may - with

appropriate planning - obtain revalidation of the H-1B or O-1 visa by applying to the U. S. Department of State in Washington, D.C. Once a complete application has been made, it can take 8 or more weeks to receive a visa. Complete instructions on how to apply are available on the State Department Web site. Recently, the State Department has been denying visa revalidation to those who are subject to a security clearance. An interview, which can only be conducted at a US Consulate abroad, is required as part of the clearance, making visa revalidation impossible. If you do not know if you are subject to a security clearance, you may contact the ISSO or IAO for advice.

Dependents in H-4 or O-3 Status - If you are traveling with your dependents, be certain to carry all items listed above; your dependents must carry valid passports with valid H-4 or O-3 visa stamps. If your dependents will be traveling alone, they must carry the original form I-797 and employment letter in addition to passports with a valid H-4 or O-3 visa stamps. Please note that your dependents in H-4 or O-3 status cannot be issued an H-4 or O-3 visa if you do not have an H-1 visa in your passport. If you made a change of status application in the U.S. and have not traveled abroad to obtain the H-1 visa, your dependents are not eligible for H-4 or O-3 visas at a U.S. consulate.

Travel to Canada or Mexico

If you are traveling only to Canada or Mexico for fewer than thirty days, you will not need to obtain a new visa stamp to return to the U.S. To qualify for this privilege, you must:

Be in lawful H-1B or O-1 status

Have an unexpired I-94 card with you (do not surrender it when you leave the U.S.)

Have a passport valid at least six months into the future on the day you return

Travel only to one of the destinations named above and for fewer than 30 days. For example, you cannot use revalidation to enter Canada, depart to another country, return to Canada and then return to the US within 30 days

Not apply for a visa while in Canada or Mexico. If you apply for a visa while in Canada or Mexico, you must wait for it to be issued before you return. If your visa application is denied, you are not allowed to use "automatic revalidation" to return to the U.S. and must travel to your country of citizenship to apply for a new visa.

Have a current original I-797 Approval Notice in your possession
Have a H-1B or O-1 visa (expired or valid) in your passport that matches the immigration status described by your I-94 card (If you have changed your non-immigrant status in the U.S., the visa may correspond to your previous non-immigrant status before the change was granted.)

Be a citizen of a country other than Syria, Iran, Iraq, Sudan, North Korea, or Libya (If you are a citizen of Syria, Iran, Iraq, Sudan, North Korea, or Libya you do not qualify for this privilege. You are required to present all documents described under

General Information, above, including a valid visa for your current immigration status.)

If you are in H-1B or O-1 status, you must have a valid passport, a valid I-797 Approval Notice and an I-94 card. If your I-94 card and I-797 are valid for H-1B or O-1 status and will not expire during your trip, you are eligible to enter the United States again even if your H-1B or O-1 visa has expired, unless you have applied for a new visa.

Other Travel Matters

Canadian visas: At present, persons from many countries are required to obtain a Canadian entry visa when entering Canada from the U. S. Visas may be obtained from the Canadian Consulate General at 1251 Avenue of the Americas (at 50th Street., tel. 596-1600) between 8:00 and 10:00 am. Consult the Canadian Consulate General for visa regulations concerning your country before making travel arrangements.

Mexican visas: Tourists cards or visas may be required for travel to Mexico. Information is available from the New York Consulate General of Mexico, 27 East 39 Street, telephone (212) 821-0313 or 821-0378.

Travel Within the United States

In general, no special permission is needed to travel within the continental U. S. However, we recommend you carry your passport and I-94 card when you travel any distance from home.

Tax Issues for International Scholars

Tax laws in the U.S. are extremely complex and the ISSO is not qualified to answer individual questions regarding tax liabilities. All international students should refer to our website for detailed tax information as well as attend one of several tax-filing workshops held each spring through the ISSO. It is the responsibility of each international scholar at Columbia to understand his or her own tax situation. There are, however, a few areas that may be of immediate concern to incoming international scholars.

Tax-Filing Requirement - All international students in F-1 and J-1 status are required to file at least one tax form by June 15th if present in the US at any time in the previous calendar year—even if they had no US income; those with income will have and April 15th deadline. Students with U.S. scholarships are advised to keep all receipts for educational expenses such as books, as you might need to refer to them in the spring when filing tax forms. Each spring, the ISSO provides free access to an on-line

user-friendly web-based application for federal tax returns for “non-resident aliens”, called CINTAX. In addition we sponsor two workshops on filing NY State tax returns conducted by international tax experts. You will receive ISSOnews email reminders about workshops and deadlines.

Scholarships/Fellowships. This funding is subject to federal, state and local taxes on the amount received in excess of tuition and fees. Your tuition will not be taxed but any stipend received will be subject to taxation. All teaching and research assistantships are taxable, according to an individual's rate of pay.

W-4 Form. For those on the Columbia University payroll (including students receiving funding from Columbia as well as those students who have on-campus employment) a W-4 form must be completed before you are able to receive payment. This form is very important. You will receive it along with other employment forms from your employer/department. Non residents for tax purposes must complete the W-4 according to certain restrictions. Instructions can be found on the ISSO web site at www.columbia.edu/cu/isso/tax/.

Tax Treaty. The U.S. has an agreement (treaty) with over 50 different countries that determine how the country's residents will be taxed while temporarily in the U.S. A treaty may specify that residents of that country are exempt from all or part of U.S. income tax. These tax treaties are very specific and it should be noted that just because someone is a resident of a tax treaty country does not mean that the person will automatically qualify for tax benefits. If your country is one that carries a tax treaty with the U.S., you will want to complete the [Form 8233](#) before being put on Columbia's payroll (this includes those who will be receiving funding from Columbia).

In addition to reviewing tax information on the ISSO web site, you can check the Internal Revenue Service site (www.irs.gov) for complete U.S. tax information, publications and forms. For New York State tax information/publications/forms, go to www.tax.state.ny.us.

Pre-Departure Information Resources

Getting to Campus

Columbia University is located in the borough of Manhattan. The main entrance to the Morningside campus is at Broadway and West 116th Street. The center of the Medical Center campus is located at West 168th Street and Fort Washington Avenue.

The New York City area is served by three airports. John F. Kennedy (JFK) Airport is located in Queens, approximately 25 miles from Columbia. LaGuardia Airport is also in Queens, but is

about 15 miles from Columbia. Newark Liberty Airport is located in the state of New Jersey and is about 20 miles from Columbia. Most international students will arrive at JFK. LaGuardia only has international flights to and from Mexico and Canada. Transportation to Columbia from Newark is the most expensive because it is located in another state. All three airports have Ground Transportation Information counters near the baggage claims. Ground transportation options are also posted on their websites so you can make transportation plans in advance of your arrival.

JFK: www.panynj.gov/airports/jfk.html

Newark: www.panynj.gov/airports/newark-liberty.html

LaGuardia: www.panynj.gov/airports/la Guardia.html

By Taxi – The easiest way to get to your destination from the airport is by taxi. Follow the “Taxis” sign to the uniformed taxi dispatcher. The dispatcher will give you a card with the number of the cab assigned to you and the approximate fare you can expect to pay at your final destination. From JFK to Manhattan, there is a flat fare of \$45 plus tolls and tip. Because taxis have to cross bridges or use tunnels to enter Manhattan from the airports, the cost of the toll is added to the metered fare. It is customary to tip the taxi driver 10-15% of the fare. This means that the base fare to Columbia from JFK will be \$45 plus the bridge toll of approximately \$5.50 (depending on which bridge the driver uses to enter Manhattan) plus a tip of at least \$5, bringing your total to \$55.50 or more. While most taxis now take credit cards, not all do so you should plan to pay the fare with cash. Ride only in a licensed yellow taxi from the taxi stand. Do not go with anyone who may approach you in the airport offering you a “good deal” or “express” ride to the city.

When telling the taxi driver your destination, you should tell them the street address and the cross streets. For example, you might say 400 West 119th Street between Amsterdam and Morningside or 500 Riverside Drive between 122nd Street and Tiemann Place.

Public Transportation – Public transportation options exist from each of the airports; however, keep in mind it is difficult to manage large bags on the buses and subways.

Buses or Shared Vans – Shared vans, such as SuperShuttle, are less expensive than taxis and will take you to your destination. Because they drop off passengers around Manhattan, the ride from the airport to your destination can take longer than expected. Buses also run from the airports to Midtown Manhattan. If you take a bus, you will have to take a taxi or public transportation to your destination.

Cultural Adjustment

Moving to a new country, new city and a new academic environment is a significant adjustment for everyone. The adjustment process is often called culture shock. Each individual

experiences culture shock differently and there is no way to know in advance how you will respond to cultural adjustment. There are, however, some shared experiences of cultural adjustment that you should be aware of. It can be helpful to remember that the process of adjustment, the ups and the downs, is normal.

Cultural adjustment is typically described by a series of phases that begin before you leave your home country until you return home and go through the “re-entry phase”. You can go back and forth between phases and even skip some phases. The important thing is to remember that they are just phases and if you are experiencing difficulties, you will get through them and your feelings are normal.

The following are resources you can use to learn more about cultural adjustment and American culture and customs.

Yale’s Office of International Students and Scholars website: www.yale.edu/oiss/life/cultural/index.html

The videos below were created by Dan Fishel, a former international student at the Graduate School of Business at Columbia University for their orientation.

[Part 1: Culture Shock Phases 1,2](#)

[Part 2: Culture Shock Phase 3](#)

[Part 3: Social Adjustment](#)

[Part 4: American Handshakes](#)

[Part 5: Academic Adjustment](#)

Academic Life

As you begin your classes at Columbia, you will probably notice some similarities and some differences between academic life here and in your home country. The following section will provide you with some information about the U.S. education system and tips on how to have a successful academic experience at Columbia.

Structure of the U.S. Higher Education System
The U.S. education system, as a whole, is intended to provide a broad education for as many people as possible. A high percentage of the population completes both secondary and post-secondary education. Students are not assigned to an academic track until mid-way through their undergraduate program, and national exams are not required to graduate from secondary school though performance on aptitude examinations, such as the SAT, may be used as admission criteria.

Undergraduate degrees (Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science) in the U.S. include a general education component and usually take four years to complete. The first year of study is called freshman year; the second is the sophomore year; the third is junior year and the final is senior year. Most undergraduate students (commonly referred to as undergrads) complete coursework in the humanities, social sciences, mathematics and sciences regardless of their chosen major, or

area of specialization. Columbia College undergrads even have to pass a swimming test to receive their Bachelor’s degree. The major is usually declared in the junior year. Students who have received the bachelor’s degree from U.S. schools will normally have a theoretical knowledge of their field of study rather than a practical one; however, the level of study in the field approaches that of the U.S. masters level.

Graduate study includes study toward a master’s degree or doctorate in all fields. At the graduate level, students study only their major subject along with languages or other subjects that will aid them in their field of study. Most original research is done at the doctoral level.

The Central Value of Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is taken very seriously within higher education institutions in the U.S. Violations of the academic integrity standards can result in expulsion from the University. The most serious offense in the academic world is to represent another person’s work as your own, called plagiarism. Unfortunately, a few international students are found to have plagiarized each year and are expelled. The idea of what constitutes plagiarism varies from country to country so it is important that you familiarize yourself with Columbia’s policies on academic integrity. This information will be reviewed during your orientation program and is included in your department handbook.

When you are writing an academic paper of any kind, you must acknowledge, in the paper itself, any ideas you have used from other people or written sources. If you copy something word for word from a source, you must put quotation marks around it and attribute the quote to the source. If you are ever in doubt about when and how to properly acknowledge a source, you can ask your professor, academic advisor, or The Writing Center at uwp.columbia.edu/writing-center/. Books on writing and citation styles are available at the Columbia Bookstore.

Cheating on exams or homework is also a violation of the academic integrity standards. Talking during examinations, especially in a foreign language, copying from another’s paper and having someone else do your work are unacceptable. Even something as simple as asking to borrow a pencil or using another person’s calculator during an exam could be construed as cheating. Collaborating on homework assignments may also be prohibited by your professor. If you are unsure about whether you can work with fellow students on an assignment, ask the teaching assistant or the professor.

Methods of Assessment

Courses at all levels are usually graded using continuous assessment throughout the academic term. You are usually graded on every assignment given to you, including homework, pop quizzes and class participation. This means that you will

need to keep up with the reading and assignments listed in the syllabus throughout the semester.

Attendance in class is usually required, and the professor's attendance policy is listed in the syllabus.

Examinations – In-class exams are more common at the undergraduate than the graduate level and depend on the assessment methods in your field of study. Many classes will have a “midterm” and “final” exam. Other tests or quizzes may be given periodically throughout the semester and sometimes without notice. Quizzes given without notice are called “pop quizzes”. Examinations are designed to assure that students are doing the work assigned and to assess their understanding of the subject. Professors or TAs will explain the type of exam you will be taking and the rules of the exam. Often, sample questions will be given to help you prepare. There are several types of exams.

Objective Exams: These exams test your knowledge of facts. International students sometimes have difficulty with objective examinations, not because of a lack of knowledge but rather because of unfamiliarity with the exam format. Objective exams can include the following types of questions:

Multiple choice: From a series of possible answers, you choose the correct answer or answers. These can be difficult, particularly due to the subtle differences in meaning of the words used in the possible answers.

Matching: Two columns of words, phrases, or statements are given and you choose the related pairs.

True or False: A list of statements is given and you indicated which are true or false.

Identification: You give the source and a brief explanation of the significance of certain names, terms, or phrases.

Fill in the blank: You will fill in the gaps in given phrases or statement so make a complete and accurate statement.

Subjective Exams – Sometimes called essay or short-answer exams, these exams require the student to compose a full response to a question or statement. This kind of exam tests your ability to organize and communicate your knowledge of a particular subject.

In-Class Exams – These exams are given during a class period. Questions may or may not be given to you in advance of the exam. The exam may be open book, meaning you can bring notes to the exam, or closed book, meaning you cannot reference any of your notes or materials during the exam period.

Take-Home Exams – Take-home exams are assigned to be completed outside of class time and submitted to the professor by a specific time and date. These exams are usually open book. It is especially important to know whether you can discuss the exam questions with classmates for these types of exams.

Research or Response Papers

In many courses, you will be required to write a comprehensive paper based on study or research you have done in the library or laboratory. Some courses also require you to write response papers based on the readings assigned for a period of time. Papers vary in length and scope of research. It is important to cite your sources appropriately for all papers you submit. Your TA, professor, and The Writing Center can assist you with organizing your paper and properly citing sources.

Class Participation

Many professors include class participation as part of your final grade. The smaller the class, the more important your participation will be. In some countries, it is considered disrespectful to question or challenge the professor, but in this country it is viewed as a healthy sign of interest, attention, and independent thinking – as long as it is done within a context of mutual respect and academic discourse. If you are uncomfortable speaking in class, you might write down your thoughts or questions about the assigned readings and bring them with you to class so you have prepared statements to share. Some classes require participation in online discussions in addition to the in-class conversations.

Presentations or Leading Discussion

Some courses will require you as an individual or in a group to make a presentation to the class or to lead a discussion of the readings for the week.

Types of Courses

Lectures

The most common method of instruction is the classroom lecture. The lectures are often conducted with the assumption that you have read the assigned texts. The lecture often does not teach the information you read but use it as a starting point for further analysis and discussion. Attending the lecture is not a replacement for reading the assigned texts.

When the class is too large to permit questions and discussion or if you are not able to ask your questions during class, you may visit your professor or TA during his or her office hours to discuss your points. Many large lecture classes also have smaller sessions led by TAs to review course content.

Seminars

The seminar is a small class at the advanced undergraduate or graduate level. It is likely to be devoted entirely to discussion. Students are often required to prepare presentations based on their independent reading and research.

Laboratories – Some courses require work in a lab where the theory learned in the classroom is applied to practical problems.

Research Resources at Columbia

Columbia has one of the largest university collections in the United States. The extensive resources available in the 22 Columbia libraries include more than seven million volumes with over 100,000 added annually, plus an additional three million until of microfilm and 48,000 serial titles. Students also may request materials not available in the Columbia libraries through several borrowing services. With these services, most of the libraries within the U.S. are available to you. The vast information will help you in your research only if you learn how to access it. Each library on campus has professional librarians who are able to answer your questions about where to find a volume or how you can approach your research. It is highly recommended you attend an orientation to the library system to maximize your use of the libraries. Library orientations will be made available to international students throughout the month of August and as part of your school's orientations. See the schedule of library orientations for early arrivals www.columbia.edu/cu/isso/incoming/Info_Sessions_2010.pdf

Columbia University Information Technology (CUIT) provides facilities and services to help you with your research. CUIT operates a large cluster of central computer systems for instruction, academic research, and network services as well as clusters of public workstations and printers. CUIT also provides free information on how to use the computer system, and consultants are available to answer questions as they come up. The CUIT Helpdesk Support Center offers personal assistance to students with questions or problems with CUIT services or personal computing. The Helpdesk phone is 212-854-1919. For more information, visit their website at www.columbia.edu/cuit/.

Housing

Finding housing can be one of the most challenging parts of getting settled in New York. University housing is available, but because availability is limited many students live off-campus. Because it can be difficult to secure housing, you should make plans for temporary housing for when you arrive in New York. The ISSO is unable to make housing arrangements for students. The resources below can assist you with finding suitable accommodations.

University Housing

Undergraduate Students

Undergraduate students attending Columbia College and the School of Engineering and Applied Science (SEAS) are guaranteed university housing. Undergraduate students should receive information regarding housing from the Office of Undergraduate Admissions and adhere to the application deadlines. More information about undergraduate housing is available at www.columbia.edu/cu/housing/.

Graduate Students

Graduate students are not guaranteed university housing. Students may apply for university housing through the University Apartment Housing (UAH) office. Detailed information regarding the types of available housing, the application process and information for tenants is available on their website at facilities.columbia.edu/housing/

Keep in mind that you will need to sign your lease and get your key during UAH's office hours. If you will be arriving on a weekend or after UAH has closed for the day, you will need to make arrangements for temporary accommodations until you can complete the required paperwork with UAH.

Off-Campus Housing

Finding off-campus housing can be challenging. If you plan to live off-campus, try to come to New York at least three weeks ahead of time and pre-arrange a temporary place to stay until you find an apartment. It is best to start your search within four weeks of your desired move-in date. You should also be as flexible as possible with your plans. An investment of time and money early on in your search may save you a good deal of both in the longer term.

Columbia's Off-Campus Housing Assistance (OCHA) can be very helpful in your search. OCHA has online listings of off-campus rooms and apartments, guides to NYC neighborhoods, resources on how to find housing, and general information about renting. You can access OCHA's online listings after you have activated your UNI; however, if you need to access the listings sooner, you can arrange access by sending a copy of your admission letter. You can access OCHA's information online at www.columbia.edu/cu/ire/ocha

It is customary to pay at least one month's rent and a deposit – usually one month's rent – to the landlord at the time you agree to rent the apartment. It will be important that you have those funds immediately available in cash or payable by check to secure your housing. When renting a room or an apartment, you should always request a lease with all relevant charges noted, such as rent, security, deposit, etc. from the landlord. Without a lease, you have no binding agreement and your landlord may charge you more than you had verbally agreed upon.

Temporary Housing Options

Hotels in New York are very expensive. The list of temporary accommodations below offers less expensive alternatives. Listing of accommodations does not constitute recommendation of such facilities, nor is the accuracy of the description verified. Check current availability and the cost of the accommodations when making a reservation and mention that you are a Columbia student to receive any possible discounts. OCHA also maintains a list of short-term housing options.

Options close to Morningside Campus

INTERNATIONAL HOUSE

500 Riverside Drive at West 122nd Street
 New York, NY 10027 Phone: (212) 316-8473
www.ihouse-nyc.org/
 Maximum stay of 30 days
 Price range \$130 - \$180 daily

TEACHERS COLLEGE - WHITTIER HALL

1230 Amsterdam Avenue at West 120th Street
 New York, NY 10027 Phone: (212) 678-3235
www.tc.columbia.edu/housing/
 Price range \$45 - \$100 daily

UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY - LANDMARK GUEST ROOMS

3041 Broadway at West 121st Street
 New York, NY 10027 Phone: (212) 280-1313
www.utsnyc.edu/
 Price range: \$135 and up daily

Upper West Side and Beyond

This type of accommodation usually has furnished private and/or shared rooms, shared bathrooms, and sometimes a kitchen available. There is usually a maximum stay.

BIG APPLE HOSTEL

119 West 45th Street between 6th & 7th Avenues
 New York, NY 10036 Phone: (212) 302-2603
www.bigapplehostel.com
 Price range: \$33 - \$90 daily

CENTRAL PARK HOSTEL

19 West 103rd Street
 New York, NY 10025 Phone: (212) 678-0491
www.centralparkhostel.com/
 Price range: \$28 - \$179 daily

CHELSEA CENTER HOSTEL

313 West 29TH Street between 8th & 9th Avenues
 New York, NY 10031 Phone: (212) 643-0214
chelseacenterhostel.com/
 Price range: \$35 daily

CHELSEA INTERNATIONAL HOSTEL

251 West 20th Street between 7th & 8th Avenues
 New York, NY 10011 Phone: (212) 647-0010
www.chelseahostel.com
 Price range \$33 - \$90 daily

DE HIRSCH RESIDENCE

Operated by the 92nd Street YM-YWHA
 1395 Lexington Avenue at 92nd Street
 New York, NY 10128 (212) 415-5650; (800) 858-4692
www.92ndsty.org or www.dehirsch.com

Price range: \$895 - \$1,095 monthly

HARLEM YMCA

180 West 135th Street between 7th & Lenox Avenues
 New York, NY 10030 (212) 281-4100
ymcanyc.org/
 Price range \$50 - \$100 daily

HOSTELLING INTERNATIONAL

891 Amsterdam Avenue at 103rd Street
 New York, NY 10025 (212) 932-2300
www.hinewyork.org/
 Price range \$29 – \$38 daily

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT CENTER

38 West 88th Street at Central Park West
 New York, NY 10024 Phone: (212) 787-7706
www.nystudentcenter.org/
 Price range: \$30 - \$35 daily

JAZZ HOSTELS

36 West 106th Street between Central Park West and Manhattan Avenue, New York, NY 10025
 Phone: (212) 932-1600 www.jazzonthepark.com
 Price range: \$27 - \$85 daily
 \$200 per week for Columbia Students and affiliates

WEST SIDE YMCA

5 West 63rd Street at Central Park West
 New York, NY 10023 Phone: (212) 875-4100
www.ymcanyc.org/
 Price range: \$59 – \$69 daily

WEST END STUDIOS

850 West End Avenue between 101st & 102nd Streets
 New York, NY 10025 Phone: (212) 662-6000
www.westendstudios.com/
 Price range: \$59 – \$69 daily

SARA'S HOMESTAY

Manhattan Student Residence West 85th St. and Broadway
 New York, NY 10024 Phone: (212)564-5979
www.sarahomestay.com/
 Price range: \$375-\$292 weekly depending on length of stay,
 \$150 registration fee

Accommodations run by Not-For-Profit organizations**THE BRANDON (women only)**

340 West 85th Street
 New York, NY 10024 (212) 496-6901
brandon@voa-gny.org
 Price range: \$60 daily & \$1,023 – \$1,218 monthly

CENTRO MARIA RESIDENCE (women only)

539 West 54th Street between 10th & 11th Avenues

New York, NY 10036 Phone: (212) 757-6989

mysite.verizon.net/centromaria/

Price range: \$35 - \$60 & \$300 weekly

EL CARMELO RESIDENCE (women only)

249 West 14th Street between 7th & 8th Avenues

New York, NY 10011 (212) 242-8224

www.hermanascarmelitas.org/

Price range: \$60 daily \$155 - \$185 weekly

KOLPING HOUSE (men only)

165 East 88th Street between Lexington and 3rd Avenues

New York, NY 10128 Phone: (212) 369-6647

www.kolpingny.org

Price range: \$50 daily \$165 weekly

MARKLE EVANGELINE RESIDENCE (women only)

123 West 13th Street

New York, NY 10011 Phone: (212) 242-2400

www.themarkle.org/

Price range: \$85 daily \$300 – \$395 weekly

\$980 - \$1465 monthly

PARKSIDE EVANGELINE RESIDENCE (women only)

18 Gramercy Park South

New York, NY 10003 Phone: (212) 677-6200

Price range: \$198 – \$227 weekly

PENINGTON FRIENDS HOUSE

215 East 15th Street near Third Avenue

New York, NY 10003 Phone: (212) 673-1730

www.penington.org/

Price range: \$85 daily \$883 - \$1,475 monthly

Operated by the Quaker community. Breakfast and dinner included.

SACRED HEART Residence (women only)

432 West 20th Street between 9th & 10th Avenue

New York, NY 10011 Phone: (212) 929-5790

www.sacredheartresidence.com/

Price range: \$50 daily \$240 weekly

Breakfast and dinner included Monday through Friday, curfew.

ST. MARY'S RESIDENCE (women only)

225 East 72nd Street

New York, NY 10021 Phone: (212) 249-6850

stmarysresidence.blogspot.com/

Price range: \$202 - \$225 weekly

Other Housing Resources

One to World, formerly Metro International, published a housing guidebook, Help Yourself to Housing. It is available for free

online

at

www.metrointl.org/programs/housingbooklet/

www.sabbaticalhome.com/

newyork.craigslist.org/

Money Matters

Estimated Expenses - The funding amount listed on your I-20 or DS-2019 gives a good idea of how much you can expect to need to pay for your tuition, fees, and living expenses for the academic year. We estimate that you will need \$2000 per month for your individual living expenses. This amount is realistic, but conservative. It is possible that you will require more than \$2000 per month. If you are bringing your family, your expenses will also be higher. You should plan to need an extra \$800 per month for your spouse's expenses and \$400 per month for a child. You should also take into account currency fluctuations, ensuring that you have more than the required amount available in the event the value of your country's currency decreases. For one of many online currency converters, go to www.xe.com

As you plan your budget, keep the following in mind:

- You are required to register full-time every semester.
- You may need to take English courses in conjunction with a reduced academic program or English courses exclusively. No degree credit is given for these courses so if you do need to take English courses, this might lengthen the time you will need to earn your degree and increase your costs.
- If you have accepted an assistantship, your salary is subject to city, state, and federal taxes, unless there is a tax treaty between your home country and the United States.
- U.S. tax law requires the University to tax scholarship and fellowship grants that exceed the cost of tuition and fees to individuals on F-1 and J-1 visas. The tax will reduce your payments by 14%.
- Medical costs in the U.S. can be high, even when you have health insurance. All students are required to carry health insurance, and it is strongly recommended that your dependents are covered by health insurance while they are in the U.S. J-2 dependents are required by law to have health insurance. If you have health insurance through Columbia University, you can get coverage for dependents under the same plan at an additional cost.

Tuition Payment - Tuition billing and payments are managed by Student Financial Services. Payments are due at the end of the

Change of Program period at the beginning of each semester. This is typically the end of the second week of classes. Failure to pay the full balance by this date will result in late fees. Be sure to have the full amount of your tuition and fees available at the beginning of the semester to avoid incurring extra charges. Information on tuition and fees, billing, and payment options is available [online](#).

Banking

Most students choose to open a bank account while they are in the U.S. The most common types of accounts are checking and savings accounts. Checking accounts are generally used for day-to-day expenses and do not earn interest while savings accounts are used for funds that are not immediately required and earn interest. Many banks will charge monthly fees and might have minimum balance requirements; however, many banks also waive those fees and requirements for students. When you go to open an account, tell the banker that you are a student at Columbia to find out if you will be exempted from those fees. Most banks near Columbia require a letter from the ISSO (or the IAO or ALP) confirming your student status and your address before they open an account for you. A bank letter can be issued to you when you report your arrival to the U.S. A Social Security Number is not required to open a bank account. A list of the major banks in New York and their closes locations to the Morningside campus are listed below.

Banks in the Columbia neighborhood

Banco Popular: 2852 Broadway at West 111th Street
90 Columbus Avenue at West 96th Street
1200 St. Nicholas Avenue at 170th Street
(800) 377-0800

Bank of America: [bankofamerica.com](#) 2770 Broadway at West 105th Street
(212) 222-6281
2547 Broadway at West 96th Street
(212) 961-2050

Chase: [chase.com](#) 2824-26 Broadway at West 109th Street
(212) 961-2050
2875 Broadway and 112th Street
(212) 866-0293
2551 Broadway and West 96th Street
(212) 666-6110
322 West 125th Street and Amsterdam Avenue (212) 280-0362
3940 Broadway and 165th Street
(212) 740-4086

Citibank: [citibank.com](#) 2861 Broadway at West 111th Street
2560 Broadway at West 96th Street
1310 Amsterdam Ave at West 122nd

Street
(800) 627-3999

Citibank on- campus ATMs locations

Alfred Lerner Hall
Bard Hall
Black Building
SIPA
Uris Hall

TD Bank: [tdbank.com](#) 2831 Broadway at West 109th Street
2521 Broadway at West 94th Street
(212) 932-7859

HSBC: [hsbc.com](#) 2681 Broadway at West 102nd Street
1739 Amsterdam Avenue at 96th Street
(800) 975-4722

When you open your account, you will receive a set of “starter checks” that you can use immediately to make payments from your account. Shortly after, you will receive a set of checks with your name and address and an ATM or debit card. Checks are not used as commonly as in the past; however, it is good to have checks to pay rent or other expenses. Most bills can be paid online.

ATM Cards - The ATM or debit card can be used to get cash from ATMs (Automatic Teller Machines) and to make purchases at retailers. The ATM or debit card is linked to your checking account so the amount of the withdrawal or purchase is immediately deducted from your account. The card can only be used as a debit card to make purchases if it has a Visa or Mastercard logo on it. If there is no logo, it can only be used to withdraw cash from an ATM. Each month, you will receive a statement listing your balance and all transactions that were made on your account. Review the transactions made each month to ensure that you were not incorrectly charged for purchases you did not make.

Credit Cards - Most international students are not eligible to open a credit card when you first arrive in the U.S. In general, you need a SSN and a credit history in the U.S. to be eligible for a credit card. Citibank has a program where F-1 and J-1 students can apply for a credit card after being in the U.S. for at least three months. For information on the credit card, contact the Citibank branch on Broadway and 111th Street.

Building Credit - Establishing credit in the United States is important in terms of your eligibility for credit cards, loans, and having lower deposit amounts and interest rates. Good credit is established based on bank account activity history and on-time payments of bills that are in your name (i.e. utilities, phone, rent, credit card). One way to establish credit is to obtain a “secured credit card” from your bank. Secured credit cards require a deposit as collateral that becomes your line of credit. The timely payments add to your credit history. You can set up automatic payments through your bank or with individual retailers to ensure

that your bills are paid on time. When you get a Social Security Number (SSN), it is a good idea to update your accounts with the number so your credit history is consolidated and linked to your SSN. You can also talk with your banker about ways to establish credit in the U.S. and whether credit established in your home country is useful in the U.S. For more information on establishing credit, visit www.usecreditwisely.com.

Social Security Numbers - The Social Security Number (SSN) is used by employers and employees for tax purposes. For this reason, F-1 students are eligible to apply for an SSN only with authorized employment. If you secure on-campus employment or are authorized for CPT or OPT, you will be eligible for a SSN. J-1 students do not require employment to get a SSN and can apply after they arrive in the U.S. Columbia issues a 9-digit number to be used for internal purposes only to students who do not have a SSN. This number is not an SSN and cannot be used outside of Columbia.

Scholar Health Care

Medical Care

You must pay for medical services in the United States. Hospital costs in the New York area can be \$2,000 a day, and that does not include physicians' fees, which are also very high. One cannot afford to be without medical insurance. If you and your dependents are in J immigration status, you are all required by the Exchange Visitor Program to have a comprehensive health insurance policy in order to maintain your immigration status. Therefore, it is doubly important that you purchase insurance.

Spouse/Family Health Care

It is extremely important to have health insurance for your spouse and children due to the high cost of health care in the United States. Health insurance for dependents of scholars holding a University appointment may be purchased through the University at additional cost. Insurance may also be purchased through private insurance companies which provide coverage for international students and scholars and their dependents. You will also need to include the cost of health insurance for your family in your overall budget. Bear in mind that health insurance does not cover pre-existing conditions, including pregnancy. If your spouse arrives in the United States pregnant, be prepared to incur all costs associated with the pregnancy and delivery, which average \$10,000. If you are in a nonimmigrant status, you are not allowed to accept any federal funds, such as Medicaid (the health coverage available to U.S. citizens with low incomes). Current U.S. federal regulations bar you from reentry into the United States if you have accepted federal funds from health programs requiring low incomes.

Highly recommended is the William F. Ryan Community Health Center, conveniently located near the Morningside campus at 110 W. 97th Street, 316-7911, which offers a wide variety of medical services on a sliding scale—that is, the fee is dependent on one's income. Also, the New York City Department of Health offers many free and low-cost services to all residents of the city, such as child health, dental, prenatal, social hygiene, and eye clinics. For more information, look under "Health Department" in the New York City Government Offices section of the "blue pages" of the telephone directory.

The University Health Service can provide recommendations for reputable physicians. Be aware of which medical services your health insurance covers and which ones it does not. When you telephone for an appointment, ask about doctor's fees and services.

Overview of Health Insurance in the United States

All J-1 holders and their dependents are required by Exchange Visitor Program (EVP) regulation to have health insurance with specific minimum coverage requirements while in the United States. In broad terms, your insurance policy must include (1) medical benefits of at least \$50,000 per accident or illness; (2) repatriation of remains in the amount of \$7,500; (3) expenses associated with medical evacuation of the exchange visitor to his or her home country in the amount of \$10,000; and (4) a deductible not to exceed \$500.

If you are a full-time employee of Columbia University on Columbia University's payroll and receiving full-time benefits of the University, it is most likely that you and your dependents will be eligible to receive health insurance through Columbia University with your portion of the total monthly premium deducted from your salary. Therefore, you should ascertain from your hiring department whether you will be eligible for this benefit. If you are receiving health insurance as a benefit of your employment, you should wait to talk to a Benefits Officer in the Human Resources Department at Columbia and select from the health insurance options (different from the list below) offered by the University.

If you are not a full-time employee of Columbia University, or if you are a Visiting Scholar or Scientist, you must obtain health insurance from an outside carrier.

It is your responsibility to select, obtain and maintain health insurance coverage for yourself and any of your dependents in the U.S. The following is provided to assist you in your pre-arrival consideration of the confusing and expensive realm of health insurance. You will find this information helpful, even if you secure acceptable health insurance before arriving in the U.S.

Health insurance in the U.S. is mostly private. This means that you must apply to a private company in order to obtain insurance, your application must be approved, and you must pay your monthly premiums on time in order to remain insured. Health coverage for individuals is significantly less expensive than coverage which includes family members. Some insurance policies are supplements to other policies.

There are many coverage conditions, coverage limitations and coverage exclusions which will be part of the insurance policies you will encounter. You must understand these details in order to make an informed choice. Insurance companies often use words in their policies with very specific meanings, relevant to their business. It is extremely important that, before purchasing any insurance policy, you understand as much as possible about your policy and its conditions. You are purchasing a product from a health insurance company; do not hesitate to ask them as many questions as necessary, as often as necessary.

The following is a list of approximate definitions of terms and conditions often found in U.S. health insurance policies:

Policy (Whole) • A contract with a health insurance company providing for a broad range of medical treatments and/or payments in case of accident or illness. Most whole policies usually provide a standard set of benefits, but the provisions, conditions, and benefits of different policies can vary widely.

Supplement • A policy providing only very specific, limited benefits (e.g., medical evacuation, repatriation of remains), which can supplement the benefits of another policy you already have.

Premium • The amount you must pay each month to purchase the insurance coverage. In some policies, the premium varies with the age(s) of the insured.

Dependent Coverage • Coverage for your spouse or children. Sometimes, dependents can be enrolled in a policy independent of you.

Deductible • The amount of money you must pay, in each case of accident or illness, before the insurance starts paying. Most policies have a deductible.

Application Deadline • Sometimes you and/or your dependents must be enrolled in the insurance within a certain period after arrival in the United States.

Coverage Period • The units of time in which the insurance can be bought (e.g., six months, one year). Most policies are renewable, but the premiums may increase at renewal.

Coverage • The percent of costs the insurance will pay and the maximum amount up to which the insurance will pay per accident or illness or per coverage period. The coverage starts after you pay the deductible.

Hospitalization • Usually includes a semi-private room, doctor's fees, drugs, x-rays, laboratory tests, etc. Sometimes there is a limit on the number of days covered.

Maternity • Includes visits to your doctor, the delivery, and related hospital charges. Some policies limit or do not offer this coverage. Some policies do not cover abortions.

Prescriptions • Coverage for medications ordered by a doctor for use outside of the hospital.

Dental • Most policies cover injuries to teeth, but not preventive or maintenance dental care.

Evacuation • The amount the insurance policy will pay if you need to be transported to your home country for medical treatment.

Repatriation • The amount the insurance company will pay to transport your remains to your country.

Accidental Death and Dismemberment • The amount the insurance company will pay if you are killed or maimed accidentally.

Exclusions • These are the injuries, illnesses, or treatments for which the insurance will not pay. "Usual Exclusions" normally are: pre-existing conditions; eye care; foot care; infertility and birth control; injuries while playing organized sports or piloting an airplane; injuries or death from war, terrorism, revolution, or suicide; cosmetic surgery; experimental treatments; treatments administered by a member of your family; and expenses covered under other insurance policies you may have. This is not a complete list of exclusions. Different policies may have different exclusions.

Health Insurance Providers

While Columbia University cannot evaluate, recommend, or endorse any specific health insurance company or policy, a list of health insurance providers can be found at http://www.eseries.nafsa.org/scriptcontent/YP_auto/c12.cfm.

Immunization Requirements

Measles, Mumps, and Rubella (MMR) - New York State public health law requires proof of immunization against measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR). Students taking 6 or more points are required to provide either proof of immunization or blood test

results showing specific levels of MMR immunity before registering at a school in New York State. If the student has not been immunized against MMR, s/he may want to consider getting immunized before coming to the United States.

If you are unable to be immunized before leaving for the United States, a series of injections is available at Health Services.

Meningococcal Meningitis Decision - New York State public health law also requires that students taking 6 or more points receive information from their institutions about meningococcal meningitis and the vaccine that protects against most strains of the disease that can occur on university campuses. Columbia students must make an informed decision about being vaccinated and certify their decision online. Full instructions are given online, and the process takes two to three minutes to complete. Students must formally indicate their decision about being vaccinated before they will be permitted to register for classes. Certify your meningitis decision online before registration begins. See the [Health Services Website](#) on MMR for International Students

Disability Services

The Office of Disability Services (ODS), a part of Health Services at Columbia, facilitates equal access for students with disabilities by coordinating reasonable accommodations and support services. ODS works with students with all types of disabilities, including physical, learning, sensory, psychological, AD/HD and chronic medical conditions.

Reasonable accommodations are adjustments to policy, practice, and procedures that “level the playing field” for students with disabilities as long as such adjustments do not lessen academic or programmatic requirements. Examples include the administration of exams, services such as note-taking, sign language interpreters, assistive technology, and coordination of accessible housing needs. Accommodation plans and services are designed to match the disability-related needs of each student and are determined according to documented needs and the student’s program requirements.

Registration includes submission of both the “Application for Accommodations and Services” and disability documentation. The application and disability documentation guidelines are available online and at the ODS office. Students are encouraged to register with ODS at the time of their matriculation at Columbia University. Review of requests for accommodation and disability documentation may take two to three weeks to complete. Please note that students need to complete the entire registration process before they can be eligible to receive reasonable accommodations.

Columbia considers its faculty and academic program staff to be important partners in the University’s efforts to reasonably

accommodate students with disabilities. With this in mind, Columbia has established a network of disability services liaisons to facilitate equal access to all University programs for students with disabilities. Please consult the Disability Services’ website for a full list of the ODS liaisons.

For more information about disability services, please contact the Office of Disability Services at 212-854-2388 (Voice/TTY), disability@columbia.edu or visit www.health.columbia.edu.

Phone Service

Local & Long Distance Calls — for local or long distance service you must dial 1 plus the 10 digit number (example: 1-212-854-3587 for the ISSO). The area code is the first 3 numbers. In the above example 212 is the area code

Toll-Free Call — these numbers are often referred to as “800 numbers” after the original area code. For service, dial 1 plus the toll free 10 digit number. The following area codes indicate toll-free calls: 800, 822, 833, 844, 855, 866, 877 and 888.

International Call — Dial 011+country code+area code +number
See www.countrycallingcodes.com for a list of country codes.

Cell Phone Service Providers

You have two choices for cell phone service, you can buy a pre-paid plan, or you can sign a yearly contract. Since you most likely do not have a credit history in the U.S., cell phone companies may require a refundable deposit before a contract can be approved. If you opt for a pre-paid plan, please make sure and read the fine print. Some companies charge a fee to customers who use a calling card with the pre-paid plans. If you choose to sign a contract, you will be charged a fee if you cancel the service before time. Below are some cell phone providers you can choose from. Please note: these are just a few options. Prices and plans may vary at each retail store. The ISSO does not endorse any one company.

AT&T www.att.com (888) 333-6651	West 106th and Broadway West 104th and Broadway West 95th Street and Broadway
Sprint www.sprint.com (888) 253-1315	125th and Frederick Douglas Boulevard West 157th Street and Broadway
T-Mobile www.t-mobile.com (877) 387-4324	West 108th Street and Broadway West 96th Street and Broadway West 87th Street and Broadway West 77th Street and Broadway
Verizon	West 109th Street and Broadway

No contract cell phones

Virgin Wireless

www.virginmobileusa.com/

Metro PCS

www.metropcs.com/

Packing for New York

Weather - During the summer, June through September, the weather is often hot and humid and requires lightweight clothing. The temperature ranges from 70 degrees Fahrenheit (21 degrees Celsius) to the 90s (above 32 degrees Celsius). A raincoat and an umbrella will be useful as there is considerable rain.

The winter season, late November through March, is marked by sudden and extreme weather changes; several days of cold weather may be followed by days of moderate temperatures. The range in winter is between 20 degrees Fahrenheit (-7 degrees Celsius) and 45 degrees Fahrenheit (7 degrees Celsius), and occasionally the temperature drops to zero (-18 degrees Celsius). Days with snow or rain alternate with periods of clear and bright weather. The area around Columbia is quite windy.

The spring and fall seasons are generally moderate, the temperatures ranging from the 50s Fahrenheit (10 degrees Celsius) to the 70s (20s Celsius).

Updated weather information for New York City can be found on the Weather Channel web page: www.weather.com/

What to Bring - When you arrive to the United States, it is important to carry the following documents on your person or in carry-on luggage:

- Passport: valid at least 6 months into the future
- Visa Stamp: should be stamped inside passport (excluding Canadians)
- I-20 or DS-2019 issued by Columbia University
- Funding documentation: this may include personal bank statements, financial aid award, award letter from your department
- Street address where you will spend your first night in New York

The documents listed above are the most crucial ones that you could be required to present at the port of entry. In addition, the following items are strongly suggested:

- Credit card that you can use in the US
- ATM card
- US currency
- US Traveler's Checks
- Medications you use regularly; extra prescription eyeglasses or contact lenses. Many drugs in the U.S. require a prescription from a doctor, so if you have a chronic health problem that requires medication, it is recommended to bring enough to last a while.
- Valuables such as jewelry, or items that can't be replaced if luggage is lost, such as personal photos or letters
- Experienced travelers recommend a change of clothing and toiletry items in case of unexpected delays, missed flight connections, or lost luggage

Moving overseas and starting school in a new country can be an exciting, and rewarding experience that will stay with you for a lifetime. However, it can also be intimidating, frustrating, and at times seemingly inconvenient. We offer the following packing suggestions that may make your time in the US more comfortable:

1. Pack lightly: You will be responsible for carrying your own luggage, and often arrivals at New York (or any US airports) can be overwhelming. The last thing you want to worry about is your fleet of 50 pieces of luggage! Remember that anything you forget, you can purchase here. New York City is a major shopping metropolis, and almost anything you would want to buy is only a bus or subway ride away.

2. Clothes and Fashion: Refer to the section above that discusses the weather conditions here in New York. As a guideline, you should plan on bringing a variety of clothing options to accommodate summer, fall, and winter. Since summers can be very hot and humid, you may wish to pack shorts, t-shirts, and sandals. Fall weather can vary in temperature, and anything from light-weight jackets to leather jackets are typically worn. The winter months call for warm overcoats, scarves, and winter boots. Since all buildings are heated, clothes of medium weight that you can layer provide the maximum comfort. If you are from a country that does not experience cold weather, you may want to wait to purchase a winter coat here in New York.

Footwear should be comfortable for walking. Sneakers are most common, as are boots during the fall into winter. Summers call for sneakers or sandals. Dress at Columbia is typical of student style on most college campuses- casual. Students typically wear jeans, sneakers, and t-shirts. You may wish to pack a few semi-

formal/formal items for special occasions. Also, depending on your major, a suit may be a good thing to have handy.

3. Household Items: It is recommended to purchase most of your household items (cooking and eating supplies, small electrical appliances, bed sheets and towels) here in the US. These items can add unnecessary weight when you travel, and most can be found for moderate prices. In particular, electrical items from your home country may not be compatible with the US electrical supply and usage may not be permitted in the university residence halls.

4. Mementos from Home: You may want to consider bringing some reminders of your home. Photographs of family, and friends, or other small significant items can be very comforting when you're in unfamiliar surroundings.

5. Additional:

- Camera
- Small souvenirs from your home to give as gifts
- CDs or cassette tapes of your favorite music
- Alarm clock
- Umbrella

Welcome To NY! The First Few Weeks

Relocating to a new country in one of the fastest-paced cities in the world is an exciting, but challenging experience. There are many things to take care of, and they can't all be done at once. Not knowing where to find what you need or how things are done, can be unsettling and frustrating. Even a good command of English does not necessarily prepare you for the new accents and idioms you may encounter here. It is important that you be patient with yourself—and others. We know that obtaining a visa and making travel plans is a difficult process, but it is advisable to come early, before your academic commitments begin, to allow you time to settle in, get to know your way around, meet new people, and feel more “at home” before classes start. The earliest you can arrive, according to immigration regulations, is 30 days before the program start date on your visa certificate (I-20 or DS-2019).

New Student Checklist

- Find housing!
- Check in with the ISSO, 524 Riverside Drive. Bring passport, I-94 card and I-20 or DS-2019.
- Open a bank account.
- Check with your school for instructions about any required placement tests you may need to take.
- Register for a full-time course load as required.
- Get your Columbia Student Card.

- Participate in Orientation activities!
- Contact your consulate in New York City.

Getting Around Manhattan

A Brief Orientation- Manhattan is quite easy to navigate. Named and numbered avenues run north-south from 1st Avenue in the east to 12th Avenue in the west. Cross streets run east-west from 14th Street to the northern tip at 215th Street. Broadway runs diagonally across the length of Manhattan from a northwest to southeast direction.

If you are presented with an avenue address (such as 524 Amsterdam Avenue or 411 Third Avenue), call ahead to determine the cross street, or use a Manhattan Address Locator found in telephone and guidebooks as well as on-line at www.ny.com/locator/

Fifth Avenue is the dividing line between East and West. Building numbers go up in both directions from Fifth Avenue, so an address which is, for example, 12 East 23rd Street is in the first block east of Fifth, and the address 12 West 23rd Street is on the first block west of Fifth. Note that Central Park divides the east and west side of the city between 59th and 110th Streets.

Invest in a good street map and NYC guidebook soon after your arrival, and you're sure to make good use of it throughout your stay.

Public Transportation - The New York City subway system covers 231 miles of track in the five boroughs of New York City—Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, the Bronx, and Staten Island. It runs every day of the year, 24 hours a day, although with reduced frequency late nights and weekends. The subway system is a great, fast way to get around, avoiding above-ground traffic.

Riding buses when you have the time is enjoyable, for the obvious reason of being able to look out the window and see the changing neighborhoods. You board the bus at the front, and pay by using a MetroCard or having \$2.25 in change. (No bills or pennies are allowed)

Bus drivers stop at bus stops only if there is someone waiting there, or if someone on the bus presses the “stop requested” strip located between windows in advance of the stop. It's a good idea to take a bus late at night when traveling alone rather than a subway.

Using a MetroCard - MetroCards are electronic fare cards that are used for public transportation (subways and buses) in all five boroughs of New York City. The basic fare is \$2.25, regardless of distance. www.mta.info/metrocard/

There are two kinds of MetroCards:

1) The Unlimited Ride MetroCard lets you ride all you want for a specific time period (from when you activate it, not when you buy it)

- a. The 1-Day Fun Pass for \$8.25 allows unlimited usage from the moment it is activated on a bus or subway turnstile until 3:00 a.m. the next day.
- b. The 7-Day (\$27) card; and
- c. The 30-Day Metrocard (\$89).

2) The Pay-Per-Ride MetroCard can be bought in denominations from \$4 to \$80. Put \$8 or more on your card and receive a 15 percent bonus. For example, a \$20 purchase gives you \$23 on your card—10 trips for the price of 9. You get an automatic free transfer between subway and bus, or between buses, within a two-hour period from the time you pay your first fare.

For getting the best travel route between two points, use www.hopstop.com/

For maps and schedules of NYC transportation and commuter rail lines, visit www.mta.info/

Taxis - Taxicabs (called “cabs” or “taxis” are yellow and have a medallion number on the top of the roof. If it is lit up and says “on-duty”, it is available. The passenger is charged by the time and distance on a meter. It is usual to tip the driver 10-15% of the fare. It is also possible to use private car services by calling in advance to pick you up. One reliable car service in the Columbia neighborhood is AA Special Car Service at 212 666-3939, usually arriving within minutes of your call.

Settling In

Local post offices

Find locations at www.usps.com

West 104th Street between Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue
(212) 662-0355

Monday – Friday 8:00 am – 7:00 pm

Saturday 8:00 am – 4:00 pm

534 W. 112th Street between Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue
(212) 864-7813

Monday – Friday 9:00 am – 5:00 pm

Saturday 9:00 am – 4:00 pm

365 W. 125th Street near St. Nicholas Avenue
(212) 662-1540

Monday - Friday 8:00 am - 7:00 pm

Saturday 8:00 am - 4:00 pm

511 W. 165th Street off St. Nicholas Avenue
(212) 568-2387

Monday - Friday 9:00 am - 5:00 pm

Saturday 9:00 am - 4:00 pm

ZIP (postal) codes are required for all U.S. mailing addresses. To find ZIP codes use the ZIP Locator at www.usps.com/

Shopping

Food (supermarkets)

Apple Tree - 1225 Amsterdam Avenue at 120th Street

Citarella's – 2135 Broadway and 75th Street & 461 West 125th Street between Amsterdam and Morningside Avenues

C-Town - 125th Street between Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue

D'Agostino – 2828 Broadway and 110th Street

Fairway - 131st Street and 12th Avenue by the Hudson River; also Broadway and West 74th Street

Met Foodmarket - 1316 Amsterdam Avenue between 123-124th Street

Milano – 2892 Broadway between 112th and 113th Streets

Morton Williams - 2941 Broadway and West 115th Street

West Side Market – 2840 Broadway and 110th Street

Zabar's - 2245 Broadway between 80th and 81st Streets

Specialty/Ethnic Food

You can find foods from all over the world in NYC. Here is a very short list.

All ethnic foods - Soho Provisions, 518 Broadway between Spring and Broome Streets (212) 334-4311

Asian foodstuffs - Asia Market, 71½ Mulberry Street (212) 962-2020

British food items - Myers of Keswick, 634 Hudson Street (212) 691-4194

Chinese - Chinese American Trading Company, 91 Mulberry Street (212) 267-5224

Chinese Bakery - New Golden Fung Wong Bakery, INC 41 Mott Street (212) 267-4037

German specialties - Schaller & Weber 1654 Second Avenue (212) 879-3047

Greek specialties – Likitsakos, 1174 Lexington Avenue between 80-81st Streets (212) 535-4300; Ninth Avenue International Foods, 543 9th Avenue @ 40th Street (212) 279-1000

Indian and Middle Eastern Spices – Kalustyan, 123 Lexington Avenue between 28-29th Street (212) 685-3451 & Goods of India, 121 Lexington Avenue (212) 683-4419

Italian specialty foods – Milano Market 2892 Broadway between 112th and 113th Streets (212) 665-9500; Raffetto's Corporation 144 West Houston Street between Sullivan and MacDougal Streets (212) 777-1261

Japanese foods - Katagiri & Company at 224 East 59th Street between 2nd and 3rd Avenues (212) 838-5453 &

Japanese products, Mitsuwa Marketplace - Yohan Plaza - 595 River Road, Edgewater, New Jersey (201) 941-9133. Special shuttle leaves from Port Authority Bus Terminal platform 51 every hour. www.mitsuwa.com/
Korean - Han Ah Reum at 25 West 32nd Street (212) 695-3283
Polish specialties - East Village Meat Market at 139 Second Avenue (212) 228-5590
West African specialties - West African Grocery at 535 Ninth Avenue between 39th and 40th Streets (212) 695-6215

Furniture and Other Items

Bed Bath & Beyond – 1932 Broadway (Lincoln Center) (917) -441-9391
Century 21 - 22 Cortlandt Street (212) 227-9092
Columbia Hardware - 2905 Broadway between 113th and 114th Streets (212) 662-2150
Crate & Barrel - 650 Madison Avenue at 59th Street (212) 308-0011
Discount Stores - 32nd Street between Broadway and 7th Avenue - Odd Job, Weber's, Jack's and more...
Gothic Cabinet Craft - 2652 Broadway between West 100th and 101st Streets (212) 749-2020
House of Futon - 637 Broadway between Bleeker and Houston Streets in SoHo (212) 529-9190
IKEA - Call 1800 BUS-IKEA for a weekend bus schedule from Port Authority at 42nd Street and 8th Avenue East or 718-246-IKEA (4532) for Ferry to Brooklyn
Kmart - 1 Pennsylvania Plaza at 250 West 34th Street between 7th and 8th Avenues (212) 760-1188
Macy's Herald Square - 7th Avenue at 34th Street (212) 695-4400
Marshalls – 50 West 225th Street (718) 933-9062; 105 West 125th Street and Lenox Avenue (212) 866-3963
99¢ Store – 933 Amsterdam Avenue & between 105th and 106th Streets (212) 222-0202
Pottery Barn - 1965 Broadway at West 67th Street (212) 579-8477
Sleepys – 2804 Broadway (212) 665-6740
Target – 40 West 225th Street (718) 733-7199

Used Furniture and Other Household Items

Aunt Meriam's - 435 West 125th Street (212) 531-0322
Columbus Avenue Flea Market - 77th Street and Columbus Avenue on Sunday
Craigslist - newyork.craigslist.org/
Housing Works – 306 Columbus Avenue between 74th and 75th Streets. Other Locations www.housingworks.org/
Salvation Army - 536 West 46th Street between 10th & 11th Avenue (212) 664-8563, and 268 West 96th Street at Broadway (212) 663-2258

Computers, Telephones, and Other Electronic Items

Computer Sales@columbia - Columbia students may purchase Apple and Dell products at discounted rates www.columbia.edu/acis/sales/
Apple Store – 1981 Broadway at the corner of Broadway and 67th Street (212) 209-3400 www.apple.com/
J&R Computer World and J&R Music World 15 Park Row between Ann and Beekman Streets (212) 238-9100 www.jr.com/
Radio Shack - 2812 Broadway at 108th Street (212) 662 7332 www.radioshack.com/

Bicycles, Rollerblades, and Other Sports Equipment

Blades, Board and Skate - 120 West 72nd Street (212) 787-3911
Eastern Mountain Sports - 20 West 61st Street between Broadway and Columbus Avenues (212) 397-4860
Modell's Sporting Goods - 300 West 125th Street between St. Nicholas Avenue and Frederick Douglass Boulevard (212) 280-9100

Meeting People

Most people are in the same situation when they arrive. There's much to do and see in New York, but in the beginning it's important to get comfortable with the subway and bus system and to have the opportunity to form friendships and find others with common interests.

Celebrating New York! (CNY!) is a series of activities and events that begins in late July. These excursions will help acquaint you with New York City and are led by Peer Advisers—continuing students who remember how it feels to be new to Columbia and New York City. One of the wonderful things about participating in CNY! is the opportunity to meet others from different schools and fields of study at Columbia—once classes begin, it's not easy to do.

Road Scholars - An ISSO program that takes you to places of interest—but out of the City—for a day or a weekend. Full day ski trips for all levels, Washington, D.C., and Philadelphia.

International Spouse and Partners Network (ISPN) - The ISSO coordinates the International Spouse and Partner Network so you can meet others in the same situation.

International House - A rich resource in the Columbia neighborhood is International House, located next door to the ISSO at 500 Riverside Drive. I. House is a residential community of more than 700 students, scholars and interns of different nationalities and backgrounds. Today, 85 years after its founding by John D. Rockefeller, Jr., I. House is world-renowned as a center for cultural exchange and international events. Many Columbia students live there, but they also offer Non-Resident

memberships, allowing access a rich array of facilities, programs, and activities. Visit the I. House website at www.ihouse-nyc.org/ to learn more about their programs.

One to World (Formerly Metro International) – You are eligible to participate in a variety of activities offered by One to World, a not-for-profit organization serving international students, Fulbright scholars, and spouses in the tri-state area of New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. One to World designs programs that introduce visiting students and scholars to New Yorkers and to the City's diverse cultural, political, and social institutions.

Funding for One to World's programs and services comes from government, foundation, and corporate grants, private contributions, membership fees of participating universities, and program fees from individual participants. One to World's web site is www.one-to-world.org/

Student Groups - Columbia students enjoy hundreds of diverse social, religious, cultural, academic, athletic, political, literary, pre-professional, public-service, Greek, and other organizations on campus. Student Development and Activities (undergraduate) advises over 150 organizations, including those that fall under the [Activities Board at Columbia](#), pre-orientation programs like COOP and CUE, and other clubs like Columbia Community Outreach (CCO), Glee Club and Blue Key Society. You can also choose to run for one of many student government offices.

There are also School-specific and University-wide student groups and clubs. Look at [Student Organizations and Governance](#) to see if there are any that interest you.

University Offices and Resources

I need an ID card

ID Office, 204 Kent Hall (212) 854-4323. Each school may have different procedures for obtaining your student ID. See www.columbia.edu/cu/id/index.html. Visiting scholars should bring their visiting scholar designation letter; faculty and researchers should bring their departmental appointment letter.

I need an email account

Columbia University Information Technology (CUIT), 101 Philosophy Hall (212) 854-1919
You may register for an email account online before arrival. www.columbia.edu/cuit

I need to pay my tuition bill or arrange a tuition payment plan

Student Financial Services, 204 Kent Hall (212) 854-4206
www.columbia.edu/cu/sfs/

I need to see a doctor, get information about health insurance, or submit an immunization form

Student Health Services, John Jay Hall, second floor, (212) 854-2284

www.health.columbia.edu

I need to talk to someone about my classes

Please visit your department or academic advisor or (for Columbia College and SEAS undergraduates) your class center.

I want to know about registration, add/drop, and tuition payment deadlines

Please refer to the academic calendar maintained by the Office of the Registrar, 205 Kent Hall. www.columbia.edu/cu/registrar/

I want to learn about the Columbia Libraries

www.columbia.edu/cu/libraries/culpubs/culguide/

I want to find the University Bookstore

The Columbia University Bookstore is in Alfred Lerner Hall, Broadway and 115th Street. columbia.bnccollege.com/
Many course-related materials are also sold at Book Culture bookstore at 536 West 112th Street between Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue (212) 865-1588 www.bookculture.com/

I want to go use the gym

Marcellus Hartley Dodge Physical Fitness Center, near Broadway and 120th Street next to Havermeyer Hall (212) 854-2548 Go online at www.gocolumbiaions.com/ and click on Dodge Fitness Center on top bar

I want to improve my English skills

Columbia University's American Language Program offers courses in English as a Second Language (ESL). See ce.columbia.edu/node/295 or call (212) 854-3584

Teachers College offers inexpensive ESL classes, taught by TC students who are ESL teachers in training through the TC Community English Program (212) 678-3279 or (212) 678-3097 www.tc.edu/centers/communityenglish/

Columbia has a writing center that is open to all students although it is named the Undergraduate Writing Center uwp.columbia.edu/writing-center/

I want to learn more about renting a Columbia apartment

CU Housing Info for New Tenants at www.columbia.edu/cu/ire/

All about New York

Explore New York City with one convenient click of the mouse to a resource page compiled by Columbia University Libraries. The best sites for every category you can think of are here. <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/nyc/>

Staying Safe at Columbia and in NYC

New York presents some of the same security concerns as any other urban area, but by using common sense and caution, you

can do a great deal to increase your personal safety. Columbia's Department of Public Safety is a great resource. Take time to explore their website at www.columbia.edu/cu/publicsafety/ which includes information on their operations, shuttle bus schedule, escort service, crime prevention, personal safety tips, and more.

Here are some tips to follow.

- Be aware of your surroundings at all times.
- Express yourself with confidence and control (i.e., when you're asking for directions or walking alone), rather than with fear or anxiety.
- Trust your instincts. If you feel uncomfortable about where you are, or are suspicious of someone near you, leave or stay away.
- Let roommates, friends, or partners know where you will be, when to expect you, or if you're going to be late or out of town.
- Avoid walking and exercising alone—have a friend, roommate, or partner join you. At the Morningside Heights campus, if you cannot find someone to walk with you from 8 PM to 3 AM, call Columbia's escort service at x4-SAFE / x4-7233. Outside of these hours, call Columbia Security at ext. 2798 for an escort. For the Medical Center campus, call x7-8100 twenty-four-hours anytime for an escort. Don't be afraid or embarrassed to call for an escort—your safety, well-being, and peace of mind are at stake.
- At night, take the well-lit and well-traveled paths. Avoid shortcuts through dark or isolated areas.
- Be prepared and ready with your keys before you approach your residence hall, apartment, home, or automobile.
- If you think someone is following you, don't lead him or her to your destination—instead, abruptly change directions. If this person continues to follow you, get help at a public place.
- Be aware of your valuables and belongings, such as your backpack, handbag, or wallet. Even if you're in a "safe" place for a short time, take them with you rather than leave them behind.
- When taking the bus or subway, use well-lit, and preferably well-peopled, bus stops and subway platforms. When riding the bus, sit near the driver.

When riding the subway, avoid the isolated sections of the platform, such as the ends, and avoid the empty or fewer-peopled subway cars. Don't sleep on the bus or subway. Also be aware of who gets off the bus or subway with you. Head directly to a public place, such as a store, restaurant, or residence hall, if you feel that someone is following you.

- Be an active, safety-conscious student: Notify Columbia's Facilities Management Department at (212) 854-2797 (Morningside) or (212) 305-8100 (Medical Center) about broken lights, emergency call boxes, windows, doors, locks, etc. Report all crime(s) to Columbia's Department of Public Safety or the police precinct. For Morningside Heights, the 26th Precinct number is (212) 678-1311; for Medical Center, the 33rd Precinct number is (212) 927-3200.

[Free shuttle service](#) (with Columbia ID) is available between the Morningside Heights and Medical Center campuses, and also within the Morningside Heights area at night.

In case of an emergency situation, you can contact Columbia's Department of Public Safety at (212) 854-5555 (Morningside) or (212) 305-7979 (Medical Center).

Family Matters

Information for Spouses and Partners - Although it is exciting to have the opportunity of living in another country for a while, it can be challenging for the spouse of a student or scholar to settle in and find his or her own independent reasons for being here, and her own circle of friends. Students and scholars are very busy and must spend a great deal of time studying or doing research. But in addition to being busy, the student or scholar has built-in opportunities to interact with others and form friendships. Spouses and partners, on the other hand, must actively seek out those opportunities. This task may be a bit more difficult for international spouses whose immigration status does not allow them to be employed in the United States, or who may not be proficient in English. U.S. immigration regulations prohibit employment for spouses in F-2 and H-4 immigration status. Fortunately, there are many ways for spouses and partners of international students and scholars to become involved with the University and its community.

International Spouse and Partner Network (ISPN) - Your participation in the ISPN can help you adjust to life here in New York and at Columbia, provide you with opportunities to meet others, form friendships, learn about American culture, and simply have fun!

We have an ISPN Welcome Lunch at the beginning of each semester and compile an international spouse directory. There is an informal monthly lunch for spouses and partners, usually on the first Friday of the month, throughout the academic year. Children are always welcome. You will meet others who are also new to this neighborhood, as well as those who have been around for a while and will be happy to share their knowledge and experience with you. You will find others who have interests in common—such as visiting museums, jogging, tennis, movies, or forming a playgroup for parents and kids. In addition to enjoying all that New York has to offer in terms of museums, sightseeing and entertainment, many spouses have found that becoming involved in one of NYC's many volunteer opportunities has enriched their lives and provided more of a sense of belonging. The Network will acquaint you with some volunteer opportunities.

FAQs

Can I use Columbia facilities, such as the library and gym? -

Spouses who are not studying at Columbia are not eligible for a Columbia ID; therefore they cannot access to most Columbia facilities. One exception is the gym, which they may pay to use. Spouses may apply for a library card granting reading privileges but not borrowing privileges at 201 Butler Library, telephone number (212) 854-2271. Bring some documentation with both your name and your spouse's name and address on it, such as a lease or bank statement, or documents reflecting your F-2 or J-2 immigration status.

Can I work in the United States? - It depends on your status. Immigration regulations do not allow F-2 dependents of F-1 students to work. J-2 dependent spouses of J-1 students are eligible to apply for work authorization from the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Information on how to apply is online at www.uscis.gov.

Can I apply for a Social Security Number? - Social Security Numbers are issued only to those who have eligibility to be employed in the United States. Therefore, an F-2 spouse—or a J-2 spouse without work authorization—cannot get an SSN. Individuals in F-2 or J-2 status can apply for an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN). The ITIN is needed for filing tax Form 8843, required of all those in F and J status, including dependents. The ITIN is obtained by application to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS); the ISSO has information about this process. It takes 6-8 weeks for the IRS to issue the ITIN. (A J-2 spouse can apply for an SSN only after he or she has applied for and received work authorization from the USCIS.)

I'd like to improve my English. Are there classes for spouses? - There aren't classes specifically for spouses, but there are local resources. Many spouses take advantage of the inexpensive ESL classes at the Community English Program

(CEP) at Teachers College that are taught by TC students who are ESL teachers in training. Teachers College is located on 120th Street between Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue. Information on registration is available by calling (212) 678-3279 (a recorded message) or (212) 678-3097 (office phone). The Community English Program's website is the best source of information on registration dates, fees, programs and class schedules. Registration for the fall semester is usually in mid-September. www.tc.columbia.edu/centers/communityenglish/

Since I'm not working or studying full-time—and my spouse is extremely busy all the time—I'm concerned about how to meet other people and find productive ways to spend my time. Any suggestions?

International House - 500 Riverside Drive (north of 122nd Street), New York, NY 10027 (212) 316-8400. Life at International House is an experience in international understanding. Its hundreds of residents come from more than eighty countries and study or train in most academic and professional fields. An extensive program of academic, cultural, social, and recreational activities provides a medium for members to exchange ideas and perspectives and to form friendships. You may be interested in applying for Non-Resident Membership. To get a sense of the types of programs and activities they offer and apply for membership refer to www.ihouse-nyc.org/.

One to World – Located on 285 West Broadway, Suite 450, New York, NY 10013 near Canal Street (212)-431-1195, this organization helps international students, scholars, and their families in the New York area make use of the cultural, ethnic, and professional resources of the city. They sponsor various activities, including tours throughout New York and visits with American families. One to World's web site is www.one-to-world.org/

International Center in New York – 50 West 23rd Street, 7th floor, New York, NY 10010 (212)-255-9555. Students and their family members, medical personnel, business trainees, diplomats, and official visitors from abroad are served by this center, a privately funded nonprofit volunteer organization. English conversation practice is offered by volunteers to individual members, and there are English classes taught by professional teachers. Other services include discussion groups, films, invitations to visit American homes, theater parties, discount and free tickets for plays and concerts, and weekend tours to places of interest. There is an annual membership fee. www.intlcenter.org/

China Institute in America - 125 East 65th Street, New York, NY 10021 (212)-744-8181. This organization serves Chinese students, visiting scholars, business professionals, and their families, as well as others who are interested in China. Programs include English and Chinese language exchange, field trips,

weekly films, lectures, discussions, participation in the Institute chorus, and dance parties. www.chinainstitute.org/

Japan Society - 333 East 47th Street New York, NY 10017
Phone: (212) 832-1155 Japan Society, America's leading resource on Japan, is a private, nonprofit, nonpolitical institution offering programs in the arts, business, education and public affairs. Founded in New York in 1907, Japan Society promotes greater understanding and cooperation between Japan and the U.S. www.japansociety.org/.

Public Libraries - The New York Public Library and its branches provide a wide variety of resource information and special programs for residents, including lecture and film series of general interest for adults. To apply for a library card you will need proof of residence by showing a rent receipt or utility bill. Videotapes, DVDs, record albums, and books are available for borrowing. Many libraries will also have special sections and activities for children. www.nypl.org/

Information for Families with Children

Columbia University's Office of Work/Life promotes the University's commitment to a working and learning environment supportive of its faculty, researchers, administrators, staff and students in their pursuit of productive and fulfilling professional and personal lives.

The Work/Life [website](#) provides a central location for current related policies, programs and services available at Columbia University. This includes information on Child Care and Schooling. According to their website: "The School and Child Care Search Service provides personalized support for those who are exploring in-home care, early childhood education options, or special needs, independent, parochial, and public elementary, middle, and high schools in the greater New York Metropolitan area. The Service can also help parents investigate boarding schools, explore financial aid for independent schools, and provide supplemental advice, in consultation with the student's high-school counselor, for parents with children applying to college.

The School and Child Care Search Service support parents at Columbia University through school placement counseling, child care referrals, a searchable database of New York City area schools, and informational resources for finding child care and schooling."

Other resources for childcare:

The Center for Children's Initiatives (CCI) has information about choosing different types of childcare www.centerforchildrensinitiatives.org/

The Day Care Council of New York, Inc. The Day Care Council of New York is a diverse membership organization of child care and family service providers, consumers and advocates. The Council's mission is to seek support for and to assist in the development of quality child and family care services.

Other Resources for Babysitters:

Sometimes parents in the ISPN take turns watching each others' child(ren).

Barnard College, affiliated with Columbia University, has a babysitting agency for hiring Barnard students. eclipse.barnard.columbia.edu/~bbsitter/

Other resources for NYC public schools:

[Inside Schools.org](http://InsideSchools.org) is an extremely helpful independent guide to NYC public schools that provides practical tools to navigate the city's school system. Be sure to read the information at "The Basics" that includes a section called "New to NYC Schools" and helps demystify the process of enrollment. NYC Department of Education website - schools.nyc.gov/ParentsFamilies/

Religious Life at Columbia

The Earl Hall Center - The mission of the Earl Hall Center is to foster learning through spiritual, ethical, religious and cultural exchange, and to promote service to the University and its surrounding New York City communities. The Earl Hall Center includes the Office of the University Chaplain, Community Impact and the United Campus Ministries.

The Office of the University Chaplain - The Office of the University Chaplain (OUC) ministers to the individual faiths of Columbia University's diverse community of scholars, students and staff from many different faith traditions while promoting interfaith and intercultural understanding. Toward this goal, the [Office of the University Chaplain](#) creates and sponsors programs concerning justice, faith and spirituality.

Community Impact - Community Impact is an independent non-profit organization dedicated to serving disadvantaged people in the Harlem, Washington Heights, and Morningside Heights communities. [Community Impact](#) strives to provide high quality programs, advance the public good, and foster meaningful volunteer for students, faculty, and staff of Columbia University through partnerships with more than 100 community organizations and agencies who do service work in these neighborhoods. Many spouses and partners have enriched their own lives by helping to make a difference in the lives of others.

United Campus Ministries - An umbrella organization comprised of clergy of different faith traditions and lay people,

the [UCM](#) serves the needs of the diverse religious communities at Columbia University. In addition to traditional religious ceremonies, services and pastoral counseling, the ministries offer a wide assortment of lectures, outreach projects and discussion group.