J-1 Exchange Visitors – Arrival to the US

New J-1 exchange visitors can enter the US up to 30 days before the start date listed on their DS-2019. They MUST arrive to the US – and check-in with the Office of International Services (OIS) – no later than **30 days after** the start date listed on the DS-2019.

Within 30 days after the DS-2019 start date, OIS is required by law to take one of the actions below:

- **Register the SEVIS record** - *we can register your SEVIS record only if the exchange visitor has arrived in the US and checked in with our office*
- **Defer the start date of the DS-2019** – *we can move the start date of the J-1 program into the future*
- **Cancel the SEVIS record**

It's very common for visa appointment scheduling and visa issuance to take longer than expected. If that happens, it's important to defer the start date of the J-1 program to a more feasible date in the future. For some people, this may mean deferring the date by two months or more to allow for visa issuance, travel, and arrival to the US. To defer a J-1 program start date, the academic department will make a request to OIS. See procedures below.

J-1 Late Arrival Process

If it becomes clear that the exchange visitor will not be able to arrive and check-in within 30 days of the start date on their DS-2019, the academic department should submit a 'J-1 Late Arrival' request in My OIS. Please keep in mind the following:

- OIS needs at least 1-2 days to process a J-1 Late Arrival request. Please do not wait until the 30th day to let us know about the need for a deferral. If the 30th day falls on a weekend, we will need to know by the Thursday before.
- The first Late Arrival request for any exchange visitor will be processed at no charge. Subsequent requests will be charged a small administrative fee, to be covered by the department. For this reason, it may make sense to choose a realistic new start date that is several months out, instead of processing a new Late Arrival request every 30 days.
- Communication is key. Either the exchange visitor or the department contact can and should let us know if there are issues with obtaining the visa or travel issues that may affect their ability to arrive on time. We can be contacted at ois@pitt.edu.