USRA U.S. VISA GUIDELINES
(Updated 11/08)

Generally, a citizen of a foreign country who wishes to enter the United States must first obtain a visa, either a nonimmigrant visa for temporary stay, or an immigrant visa for permanent residence.

The visa allows a foreign citizen to travel to the United States port-of-entry and request permission from the Department of Homeland Security, Customs and Border Protection, inspector to enter the U.S.

A visa does not guarantee entry into the United States. If allowed to enter the U.S. at the port-of-entry the foreign citizen then has been granted either nonimmigrant (temporary entry) or immigrant (permanent entry) visa status.

For detailed information regarding U.S. visas, please click the following link http://travel.state.gov/visa/visa_1750.html and http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1286.html for information regarding visa types.

U.S. Visas supported by USRA

USRA supports the use of the following nonimmigrant visas:


Maximum period of stay is 6 months with limits to request extensions. B1 visitor can accept payment for travel/living expenses for the duration. He/she can also accept an Honorarium from research institutions if the visit is for 9 days or less. Foreign national arranges directly with the home country’s American Embassy or Consulate.


The Visa Waiver Program (VWP) enables nationals of certain countries to travel to the United States for tourism or business for stays of 90 days or less without obtaining a visa. Foreign national arranges directly with the home country’s American Embassy or Consulate. See [http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/without/without_1990.html#countries](http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/without/without_1990.html#countries) for the list of countries.

*F1- Student Visa* – a nonimmigrant visa to study in the United States. [http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1268.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1268.html)

USRA can hire students with an F1 visa in two instances:

a) Curriculum Practical Training (CPT) must be part-time work during the academic year or full-time work during vacation periods. An Employment Authorization Document (EAD) is not required, however, the School Sponsor must approve via SEVIS on the I-20.

b) Optional Practical Training (OPT) is for full-time work for a period of one year immediately following graduation. An EAD is required before work can begin. The School Sponsor must approve.
Current regulations allow extensions for qualified students under OPT. See http://www.dhs.gov/xnews/releases/pr_1207334008610.shtm for details.

**H1B Employment Visa** – a nonimmigrant visa classification for temporary work in the United States. [http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1271.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1271.html)

This classification applies to visitors in a specialty occupation which require theoretical and practical application of a body of highly specialized knowledge requiring completion of a specific course of higher education. This classification requires a labor attestation.

As a non-profit organization, USRA is exempt from the annual numerical cap. Maximum period of time allowed in the U.S. is 6 years. Status can be extended beyond 6 years if individual has filed for US Permanent Residence. Conditions apply.


This classification applies to persons who have extraordinary ability in the sciences, arts, education, business, or athletics, or extraordinary achievements in the motion picture and television field. This classification does not require a labor attestation, but does require a peer review.


This classification applies to Canadian and Mexican citizens and was specifically created under NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement). A professional visa with a maximum period of stay of one year. Extensions are permitted.

**J1 Visa** – a nonimmigrant visa classification for temporary visit in the United States for the purpose of educational and cultural exchange and is governed by Department of State (DOS). [http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1267.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1267.html)

USRA is designated by the DOS as a sponsoring organization to facilitate the entry of foreign nationals into the United States as exchange visitors to complete the objectives of the following program categories:

- Short-Term Scholar – maximum period of stay is 6 months with no extension.
- Research Scholar – maximum period of stay is 5 years with no extension. A two-year bar applies following the end of the program. Is transferable to other programs in the same category.

Appropriate visa document can be generated in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) by the Responsible Officer (RO) or Alternate Responsible Officer (ARO).

Please note: 1) exchange visitor participants may be subject to the Two-year Residence Requirement (INA 212(e)) if the participation is financed in whole or in part directly or indirectly by the United States government or the government of the exchange visitor's nationality or last residence; 2) health insurance that meets the program regulations is required. USRA provides health insurance at a minimal cost.
**Processing Time:**

Advanced planning is required to enable USRA to assist foreign nationals in obtaining a nonimmigrant visa. For current wait times for your country, please see click the following link:

http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/wait/tempvisitors_wait.php

To assist a foreign national in obtaining a U.S. visa, a minimum of 2 months is necessary to apply for entry to the U.S. either through the US Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) or through the US Department of State (USDOS).

**Obtaining the Visa Abroad:**

The following links provide detail on the process of entering the United States on a non-immigrant visa.

http://www.unitedstatesvisas.gov/pdfs/gettingavisa.02.03.pdf

and

http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/info/info_1304.html

**Other:**

USRA has the ability to sponsor foreign scientific researchers using stipends or consulting fees, as well as providing travel and living expenses. However, USRA must be given sufficient time to authorize all expenses prior to the expenses being incurred.

USRA participates in E-Verify which is an online system operated jointly by the Department of Homeland Security and the Social Security Administration (SSA).

For more information regarding USCIS go to the following link:
http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis

For more information regarding USDOS go the following link:
http://www.dhs.gov/index.shtm