

Guidelines for Hosting International Visiting Scholars

Purdue University, College of Agriculture

International Programs in Agriculture

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Overview

Purdue University's College of Agriculture has global reach and is highly regarded worldwide for its research, education, and engagement programs. As a result, each year a large number of overseas scholars and scientists seek to visit our college to engage in collaborative research and other activities. Historically the College of Agriculture has hosted thousands of visitors from all over the world. Visitors add demonstrably to the progress of collaborative science, while at the same time enriching the culture and diversity of academic departments. Many initial visits to campus have blossomed into long-term research and educational collaborations, expanding the dimensions of our global engagement far beyond what was originally envisioned. This document outlines best practices for inviting and hosting international guests of the university. It is intended to serve as a resource for faculty and staff who plan to host international visitors, and to provide guidance to department heads and department business offices to streamline the hosting process. These guidelines have been developed based on documents in use campus-wide at the time of writing. For additional information as well as specific up-to-date advice and assistance on visa issues and current university policies related to visitors, departments and faculty members are advised to contact the Office of International Students and Scholars (ISS) or visit their [website](#).

Definition

Individuals who visit campus for short periods of time, and who do not need letters of invitation or visa assistance, are typically referred to as *Visitors*. In contrast, *Visiting Scholars* are defined as scientists, postdoctoral researchers, graduate students and others affiliated with institutions other than Purdue University who wish to spend an *extended* period of time conducting research on campus, at the invitation of a Purdue host. Visiting Scholars are those who are not otherwise classified as employees, undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty, staff or postdoctoral researchers by Purdue University.

Basic considerations regarding hosting a Visiting Scholar

Historically, host departments have had responsibility for helping Visiting Scholars acclimate to life at Purdue. In the Covid-19 era, this responsibility now carries additional importance. Visitors are not likely to know anyone when they arrive, and will require considerable support after arriving. Before any invitation letter is written or submitted for approval, a general plan should be developed that indicates (i) how the visitor will obtain and furnish an apartment; (ii) how they will obtain food and supplies; and (iii) how the host will manage any health or other emergency situations. Although exact details may not be fully worked out at the time the invitation letter is issued (since this will likely precede the visitor's arrival by many months), a reasonable plan for managing the day-to-day details should be developed. Often, in the excitement to invite a visitor to engage in collaborative research, details regarding daily life

are overlooked and, once the visitor arrives, can undermine research goals. Securing housing far in advance, in particular, can be a challenge. In addition, for all foreign visitors the host department should have a plan for managing any logistical or financial risks associated with the visit or changes in plans. The goal is to anticipate possible complications and to develop reasonable contingencies so as to avoid potential headaches and disappointments.

Covid-19 considerations

The College of Agriculture continues to operate under [university guidelines](#) regarding Covid-19 risks. Guidance and approval for specific visitors will depend on the campus research enterprise in question, activities taking place in that lab or physical space, and overall conditions on campus. The goal in the College of Agriculture is to facilitate invitations to Visiting Scholars and support research operations, while safeguarding the health of those in the Purdue community. Campus response to Covid-19 risks will continue to evolve. Those who intend to invite Visiting Scholars should understand and communicate to the invitee that plans are subject to change. Once invited, a Visiting Scholar may be barred or delayed from entering the U.S., and cancellation of an invitation or postponement of research activities may occur at any time prior to or after arrival. This may have financial implications for the visitor or host, as well as implications for the visitor's ability to conduct planned research.

Key questions to ask (and answer) before inviting a Visiting Scholar

The process of initiating an invitation, securing approvals and visas, and making logistical arrangements generates a lot of work for numerous individuals. Before initiating an invitation for a visiting scholar, it is essential to think carefully about the motivation for bringing a visitor to campus and whether the benefit of bringing a visitor to campus outweighs the visible (and hidden) costs. Key questions to answer before inviting a visiting scholar to campus include the following:

1. Who is the visitor? What is purpose of the visit? Will the individual add value to Purdue activities? What will the visitor gain from the visit?
 - Have clear expectations.
 - Set goals and discuss and agree upon expected outcomes in advance.
 - If you do not know the visitor personally, be sure to seek endorsements or recommendations from trusted colleagues. Vetting is important!
2. Does the visitor pose a potential risk to the university?
 - Recent FBI investigations indicate [economic espionage](#) and trade secret theft against US universities and research facilities for a range of information concerning plant genome, new variety development, breeding programs and advanced manufacturing processes.
 - Before sponsoring a potential visitor's visa and issuing a letter of invitation, IPIA will work with ISS to screen applicants. In most cases, before a letter of invitation can be issued, a visitor's name and institution will be checked against a State Department database listing high-risk individuals or institutions of concern or those with U.S. Treasury department sanctions.

3. Does a support system for the visitor exist in the department, lab, and community?
 - Identify someone to guide and mentor the visitor.
 - Develop a clearly-defined written plan for hosting the visitor.
 - Address housing arrangements well in advance of the visit.
4. Does the visitor have the financial resources necessary for the entire stay?
 - Reach agreement on what expenses will be covered by the visitor and what expenses will be covered by the host.
 - Visitors must demonstrate proof of financial resources (in advance) of approximately \$1885/month/visitor in order to issue a visa request.
 - For short-term visitors, it may be possible to pay per diems, but restrictions apply. Check with ISS.
 - If other family members are accompanying the visitor, additional resources will be needed and other considerations will apply. ISS or IPIA can provide guidance.
 - Depending on the type of visa on which a visitor comes to campus, they may or may not be required to demonstrate health insurance coverage. In most cases, it may nevertheless be advisable to purchase insurance for an individual's stay.
5. Will there be any intellectual property or co-authorship concerns?
 - Country- or institution-specific restrictions may be placed on the nature of work to be completed, intellectual property, patents and copyright protection.
 - Review and share in advance the Purdue [policy](#) on authorship and ownership of research or training outcome with the potential visitor.
 - Discussing these matters in advance will avoid confusion and conflict.
6. What type of visa will be required?
 - Most Visiting Scholars come to the U.S. on a J-1 visa.
 - Visitors sometimes arrive on a business or tourist visa for meetings, conferences or other purposes. Given the heightened security concerns discussed above, it is important to ensure these visitors are properly screened and vetted and that their access to university facilities is supervised.
 - When in doubt about what kind of visa a visitor will require, save time and effort by getting clarity from ISS in advance.

Steps involved in initiating an invitation

To initiate an invitation, follow established procedure in your department.

1. Begin with a conversation with your department head that covers most of the questions listed above.
2. Invitation letters are initiated by the department and follow an approval process (using DocuSign) that starts with the department business office and the department's ISS liaison.
 - Make sure your expectations, time frame, and assistance (both logistical and financial) are clearly outlined in the letter of invitation.

- Routing for approval takes time, so plan well in advance. The process should be based on your needs and reasonable expectations for the university, not on the demands of the potential visitor.
 - To ensure proper routing, use DocuSign.
3. The invitation letter will be signed and issued by your department head and you (or your representative).
 4. The signed invitation letter will be forwarded by your business office to the College of Agriculture business office for review.
 5. Following Business Office approval, final approval will be issued by the Dean's representative, typically the Associate Dean and Director of International Programs in Agriculture (IPIA).
 6. Approval will be forwarded to ISS for visa processing.

Steps for receiving a visitor

Insufficient advanced planning can ruin a visit and create headaches for everyone involved. Note the following.

1. In advance of the arrival date provide or seek for assistance for the visitor's housing.
 - Finding convenient and affordable housing can be a challenge. This is a recurring problem, particularly for visitors who will be on campus short-term (less than one semester) and those with families.
 - Providing advance information on housing and guiding the visitor to make arrangements can reduce stress and increase productivity.
 - Consider housing availability when arranging for the visit. Housing during the regular semesters, particularly for short-term visitors can be difficult. It is somewhat easier to find short-term housing during the summer months.
 - IPIA and the campus Office of Global Engagement may be able to provide current information on housing availability on and off campus.
2. Arrange transportation upon arrival.
 - If possible, meet the visitor yourself upon arrival at the airport.
 - If meeting the visitor is not possible, arrange transport and communicate a clear back-up plan.
 - Visitors arriving from overseas are likely to be tired and disoriented upon arrival. Signage and instructions may be unfamiliar. Make it as easy and comfortable for them as possible.
3. Arrange local hospitality upon arrival.
 - Consider providing non-perishable food and snacks for the first 24 or 48 hours.
 - Provide a local map, written instructions for local transportation and essential businesses, and several phone numbers in case of emergency.
 - If your visitor is arriving in winter, especially from a tropical country, they may not be fully equipped to deal with inclement weather. Consider providing essential items such as a warm hat, gloves, etc.

4. Plan to guide or lead them to visit the ISS office to document their immigration and visa status.
 - The visitor must visit ISS in person early upon arrival to be officially checked-in and entered into the immigration system.
 - This may be the responsibility of the department ISS representative.
5. Accompany the visitor to the department business office to take care of Purdue formalities.
6. When the visitor is settled and any jet-lag has worn off, arrange a welcome reception or meet and greet to introduce the visitor to colleagues with whom they will interact.

Settling in, mentoring, and guidance on campus

Providing a good start to the visit is essential to achieving the goals for the visit.

1. Early-on, review objectives and expectations related to the visit.
2. Assist the visitor in getting settled on campus.
 - Provide guidance for email accounts, bench space, office space, campus ids, etc.
 - Visit common facilities.
 - Introduce the visitor to the department head and colleagues.
 - Assigning a temporary mentor/guide can be very helpful if you are busy.
3. Review the policy regarding visitors taking classes on campus. This is often a point of confusion. Even auditing a course is not allowed on campus.
4. Mentoring and coaching is crucial for the successful outcome and the professional and personal development of the visitor. Take time to develop a plan that is reasonable based on the timeline for their stay on campus.
5. Create opportunities for visitors to share their personal and professional experiences (e.g. seminars; lunchtime talks; cultural exchanges; guiding or interacting with students and colleagues; etc.).
6. Get in touch with IPIA to explore opportunities to highlight or showcase the visitor and their work and to engage with others in the college.
7. Encourage visitors to present their work on campus and at national meetings (if funds are available).
8. Utilize the opportunity to build and develop a long-term professional relationship with visiting scientists coming to Purdue. Think about the process of hosting as an investment in both of your futures.

Completion of the visit and departure

Your work doesn't end when the visitor leaves.

1. Follow university rules and communicate with ISS on departure of visitors according to immigration guidelines.
2. If an extension of the visitor's stay is needed, be sure to make the request in advance. Be aware that, in the case of visitors who are funded by their home countries, there are no guarantees that the federal agency, funding agency, or home institution will approve the request.

3. Report the timely departure of the visitor to your business office and ISS as needed (this may vary but it is a good policy to inform business office).
4. Plan for a follow up and a long-term engagement strategy with the visitor and their institution.
5. Maintain regular communication with the visitor after departure.
6. Consider opportunities to visit the visitor's institution if possible.