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**Dear International Visitor:**

Welcome to Shepherd University and West Virginia! We are pleased that you will be joining our global community.

Enclosed is the form DS-2019, which you use to obtain a J-1 visa for entry into the U.S. Please read the DS-2019 completely and sign your name where indicated. You will need to present this original form, your passport, two passport-sized photographs, and proof of financial support at the nearest U.S. embassy or Consulate to request your visa. If you should decide to postpone or cancel your visit, please notify the Office of International Affairs (contact below) return the form DS-2019.

The following is a listing of next steps and important information.

* Pay the “[SEVIS Fee](https://fmjfee.com/i901fee/desktop/index.jsp?view=desktop)” prior to making your appointment at the U.S. embassy or consulate.
* Schedule your visa interview at the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. When doing so, please read and follow the additional instructions—these vary by country. You should be able to download a visa application in advance. And please note that there will also be a visa application fee.
* Make your travel arrangements with arrival within 30 days before or after the start date noted on your DS-2019. If you cannot arrive within this time period, contact your sponsoring department and the Office of International Affairs. The closest international airport is Washington-Dulles, code IAD.
* Arrange for medical health insurance coverage—**this is mandatory for J-1 and J-2 visa holders.** Please see <http://www.shepherd.edu/medical-health/>. This can be purchased after arrival and check in. Failure to maintain adequate health insurance for you and your accompanying dependents will result in the termination of your J visa status and your departure from the U.S.
* Local housing. Rental units are generally available, more so in the summer before the school year begins. Contact your sponsoring department for assistance.
* Banking. A range of banking options is available in Shepherdstown; however, U.S. banks will not issue a credit card to exchange visitors. If you wish to use a credit card, you might want to work with your local home country bank.
* Driving. Exchange visitors wishing to drive in the U.S. may do so temporarily with your driver license from your home country or an International Driver permit and appropriate automobile insurance. West Virginia will require that you apply for a state driver license within 30 days of arrival to continue driving legally.
* Clothing. This region in the eastern United States has four strong seasons. You will need light clothing for the summer and heavy, warm clothing for the winter. If you are coming from an area that does not have a hot summer or cold winter, you can easily purchase the appropriate clothing after arrival—there is no need to make an extra effort to bring them with you.
* Become familiar with the information about J visa status located on the Office of International Affairs website. Pay particular attention to the information about the restrictions with J visa status.
* Schedule your check-in with the Office of International Affairs upon arrival.

We encourage you to visit [Shepherd University’s](http://www.shepherd.edu) and [Shepherdstown’s](http://shepherdstown.info/) websites to learn more about the university and its host community and to prepare for your visit. We are a dynamic community that enjoys the performing and studio arts, four-season recreation and sport, and a rich cultural and historical heritage.

If you have any questions, please contact:

Dr. Charles Nieman

Director, International Affairs

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