

International Postdocs

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GREAT Group Postdoctorate Section Meeting
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Learning Objectives

- Interactive session
- Share and understand what issues each of you are facing with your international postdocs
- Share and learn about some programs that address these issues

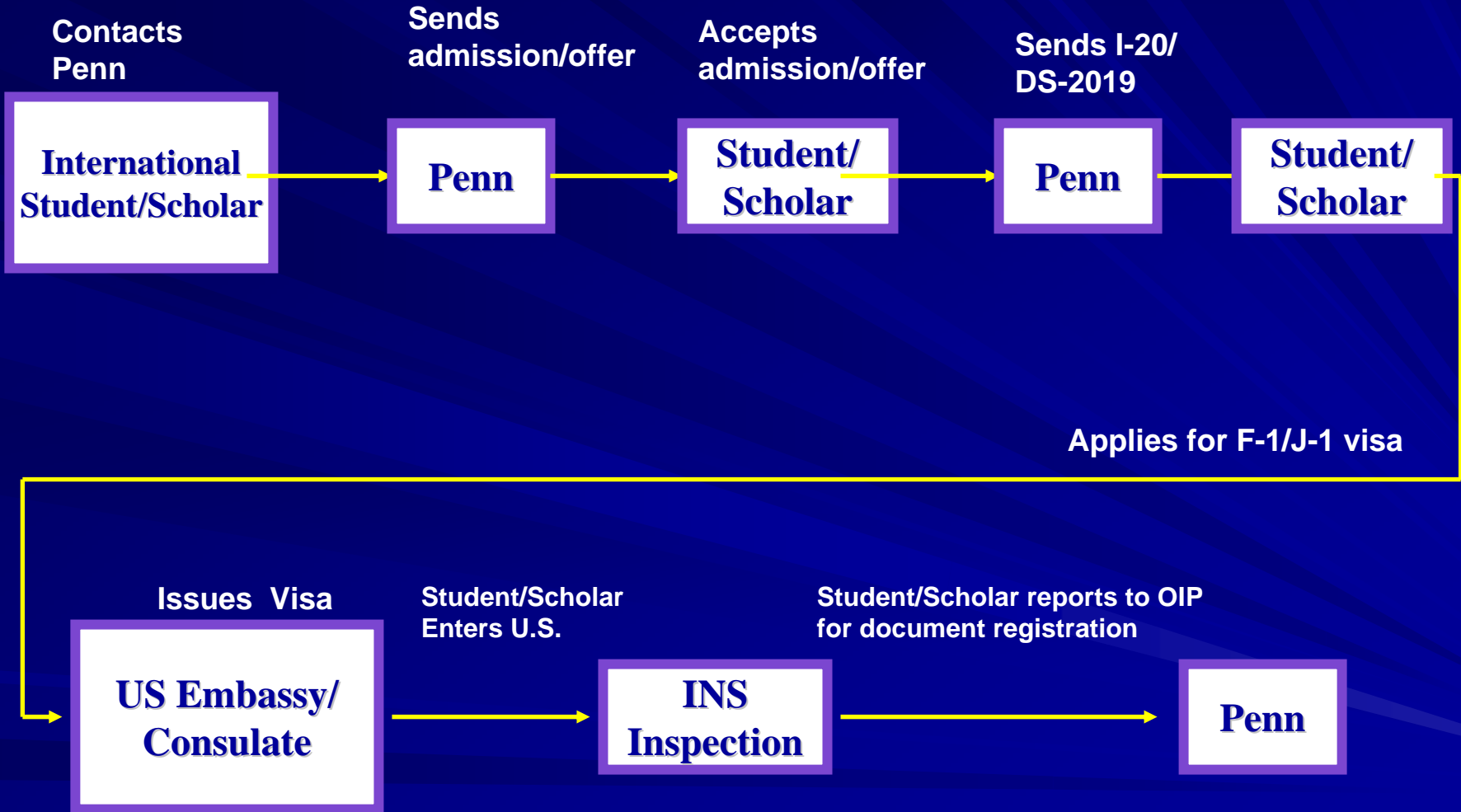
What issues are you facing with
your international postdocs?



Coming To The USA

- J-1 Exchange Visitor or H-1B Employee
 - Postdoc Fellow
 - Postdoc Trainee
 - Postdoc Employee
 - Postdoc Researcher

THEN



GENERAL ASSUMPTIONS

- I have recruited the best postdoc for my project
- The postdoc understands all of the paperwork and documentation sent from our office
- The postdoc understands our laboratory's goals and objectives

MENTOR'S PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS

- Postdoc begins the assigned project upon arrival
- Familiar with laboratory equipment
- Understands what it means to be a good laboratory citizen
- Laboratory notebook will be written in English
- Can organize and prepare data for discussion in lab meeting
- Will be prepared to present findings

Postdoc's Expectations

- I need time to:
 - Find a place to live
 - Figure out how to get from here to there
 - Order phone/cable/internet
 - Set up a bank account, credit card
 - Purchase furniture, food etc.
 - Find schools for children
 - Learn about health insurance

DIFFERING PERSPECTIVES

Postdoc vs. Mentor

- Culture shock, homesick, lonely, personal safety
- Research issues, lab protocol
- Maintaining immigration status
- Comfortable in lab and adjusted to new setting
- Understands policies & procedures
- Immigration nightmare is over

What is culture shock?

- Results from losing all familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse.
 - when to shake hands and what to say when we meet people
 - when and how to give tips
 - how to give orders to servants
 - how to make purchases, what are the “good” brands to buy
 - when to accept and when to refuse invitations
 - when to take statements seriously and when not

Stages of Cultural Adjustment

■ Stage 1

- Excitement about being in new place

■ Stage 2

- Start to get stressed--everything harder than in home country
 - Homesickness can begin
 - Complaints/rejection about how people do things in new culture
 - Can become angry over seemingly small things

■ Stage 3

- Learning how to integrate the new culture with self-identity
- Begin to accept differences

■ Stage 4

- Stability and increasing comfort with new culture. Acceptance of differences, even to the point of finding humor in them

■ Resources:

- <http://studentservices.engr.wisc.edu/international/incoming/living/culture.html>
- <http://edweb.sdsu.edu/people/cGuanipa/cultshok.htm>

Hutch International Ambassadors Program

(idea stolen from the Salk)

- New international postdoc is matched with a current postdoc who is (ideally) from the same country to assist with settling into Seattle and American culture
- Managed by Student-Postdoc Advisory Committee
 - 42 current Ambassadors
 - 19 matches with new postdocs in past ~2 years

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA BIOMEDICAL POSTDOCTORAL COUNCIL

- Pre-Arrival Information and “Buddy Trainer System”
- Monthly Mini-Orientations
- Immigration Seminars
- Annual Tax Preparation Information and Seminars in conjunction with OIP
- Monthly Seminar Series (dinner included)
- Postdoctoral Editorial Club (PEC)
- Sports and Social Activities



Professional Development Seminars

- Manuscript Writing/Grant Writing for International Researchers
- Business Etiquette workshops
- English language resources
 - Collaborations like the UC Berkeley PDO/Speech Pathology and the Penn BPP/ULAR/ GSE TESOL Graduate Program
 - Online real-time language consultant resources
 - Informal institutional language groups



When Things Go Wrong

- Departmental Administrator/Postdoc Office/Career Counseling
- Ombudsperson
- Policies around postdocs leaving the lab
 - E.g., 6 months funding policy at FHCRC
 - E.g., 3 months funding policy at Penn if terminated during the course of an appointment period

Contact Us

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