HEALTH INSURANCE

In view of the extremely high cost of health care in the USA, all participants must ensure they have health insurance coverage valid for the USA (either privately or by their institute) for the duration of their stay, covering illness, occupational and non-occupational accidents, disability, third-party liability, repatriation and death.

VISA APPLICATIONS - B-1 (Business Visitor) - General Information

DISCLAIMER: The following describes general information about obtaining visas to enter the USA and is NOT intended to be construed as legal advice.

1. The SLAC National Accelerator Laboratory (SLAC) will issue an Invitation Letter to each attendee requiring a visa to enter the USA. The Invitation Letter will confirm the general reason for the invitation (to attend a meeting) and the general duration of the attendance. The invitation letter will refer to the meeting as a symposium.

2. The visitor’s home institution also should issue a letter. The letter MUST explain who the visitor is, and (briefly) his/her credentials. The letter must confirm that the individual’s connections to the home institution (title, job, tenure, nature of appointment, etc.) and confirm that it is anticipated that the individual will return to the home institution at the conclusion of the meetings. If possible, the letter also should say that the home institution wants the individual to attend the meetings because the information and discussions will be valuable to the continued work the individual will perform for the home institution upon return back home after the meetings.

3. The visitor then can apply to the U.S. Embassy/Consulate in his or her home country or country of current residence for a B1/B2 VISA entry stamp, or preregister to enter the U.S. without a visa via the Visa Waiver Program. If the visitor cannot get a visa appointment soon enough, he/she should look into the consulate’s “expedite” procedures, or call back frequently as appointments may open up due to cancellations. During the interview at the U.S. Embassy/Consulate, they should ask when a decision might be made. If the decision will be made too late to enable the individual to come to the school, then they should explain this during the interview so that the Consular Officer is aware.

4. When the visitor enters the U.S., it is EXTREMELY important that the immigration officer at the airport writes “WB” or on his/her passport page or “B-1” on his/her I-94 card. Whatever is written should not indicate “WT” (Waiver for Tourist) or B-2. We cannot allow tourists into the Lab facilities. If the visitor holds tourist status, he/she would have to go to Deferred Inspections in San Francisco to get their status corrected. It is much easier if the visitor simply reads the card while still with the immigration officer, and if there is an error to have it corrected then.
VISA WAIVER PROGRAM

Go online to: http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/without/without_1990.html to determine whether or not you are eligible for participation.

Individuals who are eligible to participate in the Visa Waiver Program must register AND pay a registration fee prior to arrival into the U.S. Please review the U.S. Department of State web site at http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/without/without_1990.html for requirements.

During the entry procedure at a U.S. Port of Entry, an Immigration Officer will place an entry notation on one of your passport pages. This notation will indicate your date of arrival, your Port of Entry, your visa waiver status, and how long you may remain in the U.S. You must ensure he/she indicates you have been granted WB (Waiver for Business) status. Be sure to check your waiver status BEFORE you LEAVE the inspections area at the airport. If you are inadvertently provided WT (Waiver for Tourist) status, please ask for a correction. If necessary, ask to speak with an inspections supervisor to obtain a correction.

If you are not eligible to participate in the Visa Waiver Program, you must apply for and obtain a B1/B2 entry visa stamp from a U.S. Embassy/Consulate.

VISA APPLICATIONS - B-1 (Business Visitor) - Step-by-Step

DISCLAIMER: The following describes general information about obtaining visas to enter the USA and is NOT intended to be construed as legal advice.

Steps to Apply for your Visa:

1. Go online to http://www.usembassy.gov/, which is a listing of all the different U.S. Embassies worldwide. Select the city where the U.S. Embassy/Consulate where you will apply is located. You will be directed to the main website for the U.S. Embassy/Consulate. Go to the Consular Section, and review the local procedures for visa applications for B-1 Business Visitor Nonimmigrant visas.

2. The U.S. Embassy/Consulate website will include an electronic DS-156 Standard Visa Application Form. Complete this form online. Use the attached template as guide while you complete the online forms. When you finish and press “submit”, the form will re-appear with a bar code showing on the right side. Print the form and sign it.
3. The U.S. Embassy/Consulate website for your location will instruct as to whether you must also complete a Form DS-157 Supplemental Visa Application Form, and/or DS-158, and/or other forms. If so, complete the necessary forms, but note that these are not “electronic”. Again, print and sign once complete.

4. In most countries, the online application system will issue your appointment date either before or after you submit the DS-156. In some countries, you might have to call a local number to get the appointment scheduled. In either case, the appointment date should be at least 2 months prior to the date you want to actually enter the U.S. If you are worried that the appointment date issued to you is too late for your planned travel to the U.S., check the Consulate’s website to see whether there are instructions for getting an expedited appointment. There also might be a number to call to speak to the appointment reservation system (which usually is a private company unrelated to the U.S. Consulate itself). In some U.S. Embassies/Consulates, it is possible to check back each day to see if appointments on earlier dates have become available due to cancellations.

On the date of your interview, go to the U.S. Embassy/Consulate with all the necessary paperwork, as listed below. Many other people will be assigned the same date and time. You will not be permitted into the U.S. Embassy/Consulate until your specific appointment time, so there is little point in arriving very early. Do not, however, arrive late. You must wait outside the U.S. Embassy/Consulate until they admit you, so be prepared for weather, etc.

It often is helpful to bring with you an original and one copy of each document, so that you can show the original to the Consular Officer and then give them the copy, thereby eliminating the need for them to make copies themselves.

Please note: U.S. Embassies/Consulates worldwide have instituted stringent security policies. As a result, the following are prohibited: electronic devices of any kind (including cellular telephones), backpacks, suitcases, attachés or briefcases, strollers, or similar items (for example, many embassies prohibit any more than one baby bottle). Security personnel will not store items for visa applicants and will confiscate all weapons. Accordingly, if you bring to your interview an item that cannot be allowed into the building, you will lose it permanently or be refused admission to the building. If you have concerns about whether a specific item will be allowed into the building, please contact the U.S. Embassy/Consulate.

**Typical Documents You Must Take to the Consulate for your Interview Appointment:**

- Signed print-out of the Form DS-156 Standard Visa Application that you electronically filed, showing the computerized barcode.
- Signed Form DS-157 (if applicable).
- A color photo with a white background that is less than six months old, 5cm x 5cm, showing you facing the camera directly.
- Your current passport, valid for at least six months longer than the anticipated stay in the U.S., and with at least three free/unmarked pages. If you have held previous passports, please also take them to the U.S. Embassy/Consulate on the day of the interview.
Signed Invitation Letter from Dr. Barish, Director, ILC GDE.
Signed Letter from your host institution.
Signed Letter from Dr. Chou, Chair, ICFA BD Panel, explaining the nature of the Symposium.
Evidence of strong ties to the country where you currently reside, to show that when your activities in the U.S. end, you will leave the U.S.:
  o Evidence of ongoing studies or employment at your host institution.
  o Evidence of income, such as earnings statements, if any.
  o Evidence of immediate family (such as parents) in your host country (if applicable).
  o Evidence of ownership of property, if any.
Evidence of your credentials, such as copies of degrees or diplomas, if these are accessible.

Again, this list is what typically is required by U.S. Embassies/Consulates, but you must check with the specific U.S. Embassy/Consulate where you will apply to confirm if additional documents are needed.

**Interview:**

When you are called for your interview, you will hand over all of the necessary documents to the Consular Officer. The Consular Officer will ask you questions about your proposed visit to the U.S., and possibly your credentials, and current activities at your host institution. Please try to answer the questions using simple terms, and not scientific terms. If you are not sure of what a question means, ask for clarification. The Consular Officer must understand what it is you do now and what you will do while in the U.S., and confirm that the activities are not potentially threatening to U.S. national security. If they cannot understand you, or are alarmed by the information you provide, there is an increased risk of additional security clearances.

During your interview, you will be fingerprinted and subjected to certain “normal” security clearances. These are done during every visa application, regardless of whether you have had a visa issued previously and regardless of whether you have led a blameless, innocent life.

The security clearances are conducted against international and U.S. criminal, immigration, and other databases, and are based on your name, algorithmic variations of your name, your biographic data, and other triggers. **In the great majority of cases, security clearances are completed within a few days of your interview.** In a very small percentage of cases, however, the U.S. Embassy/Consulate might need a Security Advisory Opinion (SAO) from the Department of State's (DOS) Visa Office in Washington, D.C. Obtaining the SAO might take 2 to 4 weeks. In rare circumstances, the SAO might be adverse, in which case, further information is required. In this case, obtaining the necessary final security clearance might take several weeks or months. Because the security protocols are based on mathematical variations of your name and on other circumstances, an SAO might be required (and might be adverse) even if your character, criminal record, and immigration history are completely problem-free. However the U.S. Embassy/Consulate cannot issue the visa until all security clearances are passed.
**Visa Issuance:**

Assuming the security clearances are successful, and you have a successful interview, your visa application will be approved. You then must arrange with the U.S. Embassy/Consulate for the return of your passport with the new visa, as well as your other paperwork.

**Admission to the U.S.:**

Following the issuance of the visa, you may enter the U.S. When you do so, present your passport with the new visa inside it. The Immigration Officer at the airport might ask a few questions about the Symposium, or about other aspects of your life (such as about your school or your employer). Be concise and precise with your answers. When satisfied, the officer will issue you an “I-94 Arrival Departure Card,” which is a small white card that is stapled into your passport. The officer will handwrite onto the card the visa classification granted to you, and the end date of your “authorized stay” in the U.S. **The officer must write “B-1” on the card, and not “B-2”**. If the officer writes “B-2” point out that this is an error and that you are attending a Symposium, which is a business activity, and politely ask the officer to correct the card.

The end date of your authorized stay is noted on the I-94 card and is the last day you are permitted to remain in the U.S. You must leave the U.S. on or before this end date. This card is the only evidence of your authorized status in the United States, so ensure that it is safe.