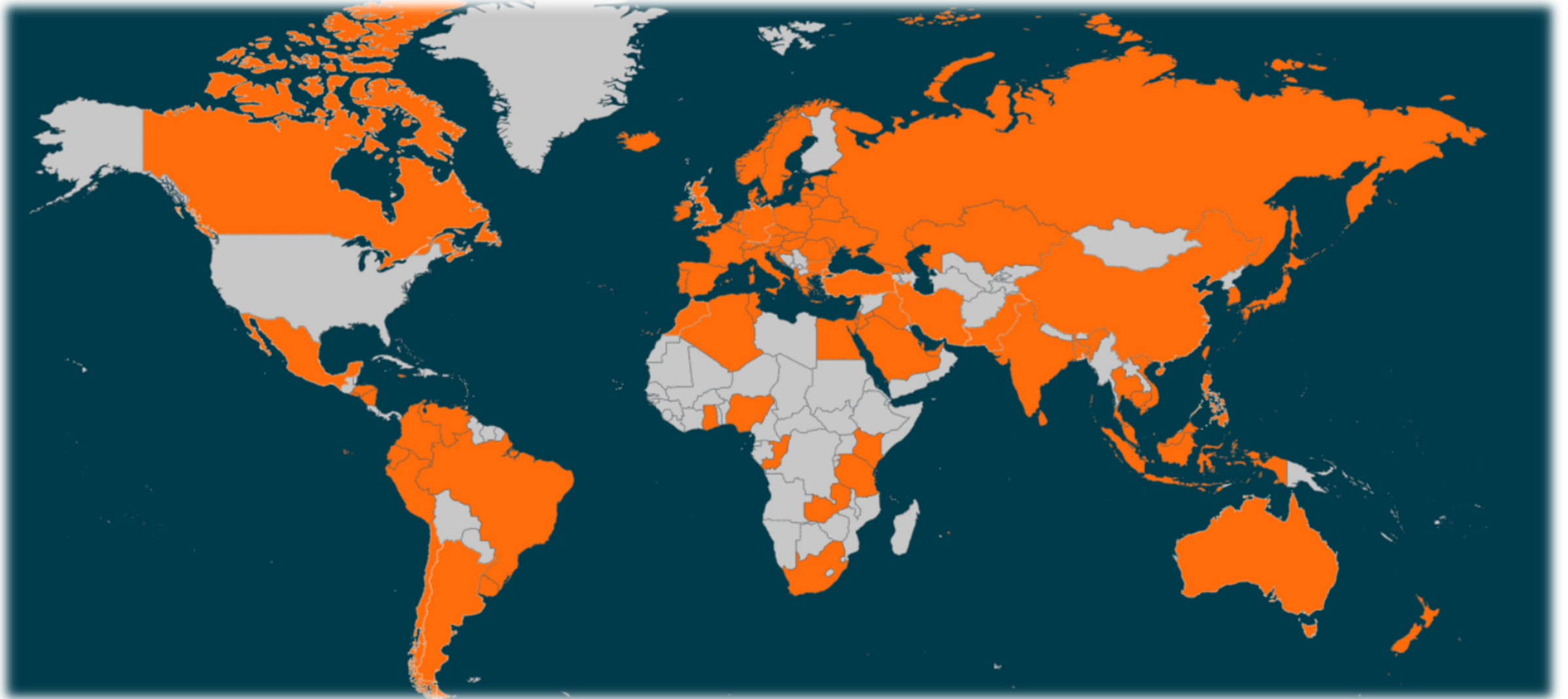# International Travel: Exiting and Entering the United States

International Offices and Staff and Faculty Consultation Center

Ilana Smith, October 6, 2021

(Almost) All the World at Caltech/JPL

Agenda

- Travel Basics
- Visa Interview Waivers
- Travel Bans
- International Offices
- Presubmitted Questions
- Q and A

Travel Basics

- U.S. Department of State (U.S. Consulates/Embassies)
  - Issues visa stickers in foreign passports
  - A visa (or visa waiver ESTA) allows travel to the United States
- U.S. Department of Homeland Security (Customs and Border Protection)
  - Admits foreign nationals into the United States
  - I-94 defines nonimmigrant status inside the United States

Expansion of Interview Waiver Eligibility

March 11, 2021

- A visa applicant who is applying for a new visa in the same visa classification as their previously issued visa, if their prior visa expired within 48 months of the application.
    - Previously, this was limited to prior visas that had expired within 12 months.
- Expiration: December 31, 2021
- Intention: Reducing the risk of COVID-19 transmission to other applicants and consular staff.
- Process: Consult the website of the nearest U.S. Embassy/Consulate
- https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/News/visas-news/expansion-of-interview-waiver-eligibility.html

Important Announcement on F, M, and Academic J Visas

September 14, 2021

- An F or J visa applicant who has previously held any U.S. visa (regardless of the visa classification).
- An F or J visa applicant who is from a Visa Waiver country (ESTA), even if they have not previously held any U.S. visa.
  - J categories: students, professors, research scholars, short-term scholars
  - Consular officers may, if they so choose, and pursuant to local conditions
  - Travel bans are still in effect. F applicants are automatically be considered for an NIE to travel. J travelers must contact a U.S. Embassy/Consulate prior to travel to receive an NIE.
- Expiration: December 31, 2021
- Intention: Recognizing the importance of international students and scholars to U.S. higher education.
- Process: Consult the website of the nearest U.S. Embassy/Consulate to confirm the level of services currently offered and to find guidelines for applying for a visa without an interview.
- https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/News/visas-news/important-announcement-on-F-M-and-academic-J-Visas.html

Examples – Who is eligible for the in-person interview waiver?

- An H-1B visa applicant with an expired H-1B visa that that is less than 4 years old.

- An F or J visa applicant with an expired B-2 visa (or any other classification).

- An F or J visa applicant with a valid B-2 visa (or any other classification).

- An F or J visa applicant, citizen of South Korea (a Visa Waiver Program country), even without ESTA registration.

What does being eligible for an in-person visa interview waiver mean?

- You may be eligible for an in-person visa interview waiver **but**:
  - You still need to be outside the United States to apply for a visa.
  - U.S. Embassy/Consulates have still not resumed regular processing. We don't know how long the visa issuance will take.
  - Each U.S. Embassy/Consulate is going to have their own standards and instructions. Their websites may not be updated.
  - For example from the U.S. Embassy in Bratislava
    - Nothing about F or J
    - Need residence or nationality
    - Prior visa issued after 8/2007

Travel Ban Announcement

September 20, 2021

- Travel bans will end in "early" November 2021.
- In their place, the United States will require all foreign national travelers to demonstrate:
  - Fully vaccinated against COVID-19
  - Negative COVID-19 test within three days of boarding a flight to the United States
- CDC has announced that the United States will accept any of the vaccines approved for emergency use by the World Health Organization.
- Exceptions:
  - Children
  - COVID-19 vaccine clinical trial participants
  - Humanitarian exceptions for people traveling for an important reason and who lack access to vaccination in a timely manner.
  - Individuals who are exempted from the vaccine requirement may be required to be vaccinated upon arrival.

What does the end of the travel bans mean?

- If you are traveling from Brazil, China, European Schengen Countries, India, Iran, Ireland, South Africa, or the United Kingdom:
  - You will be able to fly directly into the United States without a having to demonstrate eligibility for National Interest Exemption.
    - F students have been able to do this since June 2021.
  - You can leave the United States at any time but you will only be able to return once the travel bans have ended.
    - We don't have an exact date yet.
  - You will still need a valid visa (or visa waiver) to enter the United States.
    - We don't know how long the visa issuance will take.
    - U.S. Embassy/Consulates have still not resumed regular processing.

Role of the International Offices

- Represent Caltech and JPL to the government
  - Provide documents needed for visa interviews
- Provide information about rules and regulations
- Identify possible options and likely outcome

- Do not represent international scholars or students
  - Visa interviews are personal applications
- Do not provide guidance on process
- Do not follow process at each U.S. Consulate/Embassy or POE
- Cannot guarantee outcome

Presubmitted Questions

- Auto-revalidation for travel to Canada/Mexico (and adjacent islands)
    - https://international.caltech.edu/travel-new/automatic-visa-revalidation
    - Less than 30 days, no visa application
    - Travel with valid passport, expired visa, I-94 hard copy, & other immigration documents

- Travel signatures
    - J valid for 1 year
    - F valid for 1 year while you are student, valid for 6 months while on OPT/STEM OPT

Presubmitted Questions

- Can I get my visa issued while I am inside the United States?
  - No. You must be out of the country to apply for a visa.
- Administrative Processing
  - If my previous visa was subject to administrative processing, can I expect the same timeline for my next visa issuance? Probably.
- Will I need to quarantine after travel?
  - No. Fully vaccinated people are not required to quarantine after international or domestic travel.
- When will the vaccination requirement come into effect?
  - In November, once the travel bans end.

Presubmitted Questions

- Travel in December to Europe and India (all visa categories)
    - If the travel bans end in November, you will be able to travel from any of the 33 countries directly into the United States without needing an National Interest Exemption.
    - You may be eligible for an in-person interview waiver if you are applying for a second visa in the same category, or if you are applying for an F or J visa and you previously had any visa or are from a visa waiver program country.
    - Your visa will need to be issued by December 31, 2021.
    - U.S. Consulates/Embassies may still be severely backlogged.
- When can visitors (or Caltech/JPL family members) from Europe and India enter the United States?
    - After the travel bans end in November, provided they comply with the vaccination requirement or have a waiver.
- Can Caltech help with Expediting Visa appointments?
    - No
- Visa issuance and transitioning to new employer?
    - Same guidance

Questions, Resources, and Next Session

International Students and Scholars: Tools for Connection and Success
Staff and Faculty Consultation Center
Thursday, October 7 at 12 PM
https://hipaa-caltech.zoom.us/j/81605954731

https://international.caltech.edu/travel-new/current_travel_guidance

https://together.caltech.edu/faq/travel

https://together.caltech.edu/faq/international

https://together.caltech.edu/faq/vaccination-faq