

# CGE- International Student Scholar Services Handout

## Bringing Your Dependents

### Are you considering bringing your spouse and/or child(ren) with you while you study at JMU?

We know that moving to the United States can be stressful: a new city, new food, new language, new rules you may not understand, on top of your studies- there is so much to learn and to adjust to! Being away from your loved ones can make this process even more challenging for you. Having your loved ones (called dependents- defined as a spouse and/or any children) with you, can be a support to you and it provides them a great new opportunity to experience life in the US. It is also important to understand how your loved ones may be challenged by this life change. For them, this may also be only stressful, and lonely time due to different factors in their adjustment.

### Considerations to keep in mind:

#### Immigration considerations

##### Option #1: Visitor visa (B-2 visa)

If your dependent(s) plan to only remain in the US for a short visit, you will generally need these documents (unless stated otherwise on the US Embassy webpage for your country):

- Valid passport
- Photographs
- Visa fee receipt
- Visa application form/s

Additionally, documentation that makes clear the visit is temporary will help strengthen the visa application. This documentation should show proof of ties to the home country.

Examples of this documentation include proof of employment, proof of property ownership, proof of finances, and proof of contact with family members in their home country. You may also write an invitation letter for your dependents' visa application; see [Invitation Letter webpage](#).

##### Option #2: Dependent visa (F-2 visa)

If your spouse and children under 21 plan to accompany you to the US for a longer stay, they will likely want to apply for F-2 visas. You will need to provide the following documents to your Designated School Official (Thomas Lavenir or to [iss@jmu.edu](mailto:iss@jmu.edu)):

- A scanned copy of your family member's biographies and photo passport page
- A scanned copy of financial documentation that indicates you are

able to support your dependents while they are in the US: \$6,000 for your spouse and \$3,000 for each child.

Note: You/your dependents will need to show an official document that verifies that your union/marriage is "recognized in the place of celebration" and/or a birth certificate for each child to the consular officer and possibly immigration officer at the port of entry.

#### Important pieces of information about the F-2 status:

1. Spouses in F-2 status may not accept employment under any circumstances.
2. If the F-2 dependent wishes to pursue full-time study in a degree-granting program, they must first apply for and obtain a change of status to F-1. F-2 children may engage in full-time study at the K-12 level.
3. Spouses in F-2 status are only permitted to study in:
  - a. less than a full course of study that may lead to a degree, and/or
  - b. recreational or hobby courses.
4. If you as the F-1 student plan to be outside the US for an extended period of time (for example, 5 months or longer), your F-2 dependent cannot remain in the US for this time as an F-2.

#### Financial Considerations

In addition, to needing additional funding for immigration purposes, living expenses may increase by 50% or more, since you will likely pay higher rent than single students, purchase more food, pay for child care, etc. Use the [Cost of Living Calculator](#) to figure out daily and monthly living costs.

#### Social & Cultural considerations

Spouse transitions are difficult because you may spend far more time on campus with your classes, homework, research and work than you will at home. Also, given the distance from other family and social networks, spouses may feel lonely. Finding new connections in a new community take time. If your spouse previously worked professionally outside of the home, they may also face a difficult transition as they will not be permitted to work in the US in their F-2 status.