

ALIEEP EDUCATOR PROGRAM – ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY

Overview for ALIEEP personnel and program applicants:

ALIEEP's primary mission is to provide multilingual and multicultural education to students and professionals in Alabama and other nations. Its secondary mission is to enhance workforce development opportunities under the guidance and policies of the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) and the Alabama State Commission on Higher Education to support the economic prosperity of individuals and communities. To achieve the objectives, ALIEEP facilitates international partnerships between Alabama institutions and agencies and those of other nations.

The primary mission is similar to the well-known **Bridge USA**, which is rooted in the **Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961 (Fulbright-Hays Act)** and operates under the Department of State. Therefore, ALIEEP, the application by its predecessor, A-KEEP, has sought sponsorship from J-1 Exchange Programs: the **J-1 Teacher Exchange** and **J-1 Internship Program**. Therefore, facilitating the J-1 Teacher Exchange Program serves the primary objective by providing high-quality cultural exchanges for Alabama K-12 schools, serving 750,000 students, their parents, and the communities at large. Facilitating the J-1 Internship Program serves the public by supporting small businesses and large Alabama corporations, while training inexperienced young international talent to **take "Sweet Home Alabama" back** to their home countries.

To carry out its mission, ALIEEP inherited the A-KEEP **Bridge of Unity in Diversity (BUD)** programs and provides **quarterly multicultural diversity education** throughout the year. Winter annual **World Kite Festival** celebrates the Lunar New Year; Spring annual **"Challenge Alabama"** showcases multicultural performing arts in early May; Summer annual **Cultural Heritage Nights** highlights various folk games and introduces traditions with sports teams, especially with the Montgomery Biscuits throughout the summer; and Fall annual **Make & Take Exhibition** provides ethnic Craft Arts workshops at K-12 schools, Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts, community churches, and provides lengthy exhibitions.

ALIEEP has established international partnerships through formal **educational exchange** agreements with **equitable reciprocity**. To honor international partners, respect their valuable talents, and maintain long-term relationships, **they "loan"** their educational assets, and **we "borrow"** their experienced educators, placing them in Alabama's K-12 schools and workplaces. We also ask Alabama businesses to train international interns alongside Alabama interns so they can practice their classroom knowledge, learn new skills, and exchange different ways of doing things. At the same time, ALIEEP encourages all Alabama institutional partners or member organizations to send or "loan" Alabama's talents and Southern hospitality to our international partners or to foreign countries. Currently, there are **active reciprocal exchanges** by students between Alabama and South Korea and between Alabama and Taiwan. ALIEEP has other national educational partnerships. We encourage additional, robust cultural exchanges among professionals.

Under ALIEEP's primary mission and the United States Department of State's designation, ALIEEP has two programs associated with the J-1 visa: **BUD (Bridge of Unity in Diversity) Teacher** and **OJT (On-the-Job Training) Intern**.

The Chairman of the ALIEEP Board of Directors, **Dr. Jim Purcell**, is the Executive Director of the Alabama State Commission on Higher Education (ACHE) and has been championing **"Retain Alabama Talents; Retain Alabama's Education."** With his leadership, ALIEEP works with the

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fourteen (14) Alabama public universities and their international offices and supports their international students and graduates, albeit with limited resources.

Under Retain Alabama's Education policy, ALIEEP facilitates H-1B sponsorships for international graduates from an Alabama public university who want to pursue, and can fulfill a teaching requirement to assist high-demand STEM education by connecting them with local K-12 schools for potential employment; it is called the **RAIE** (Retain Alabama's International Educator). Therefore, ALIEEP's H-1B candidate selection focuses on Optional Practical Training (OPT) for F-1 visa holders, is designed to serve Alabama graduates, and is much more restrictive, prohibiting transfers to other programs or visas through changes in visa status.

As of 2026, ALIEEP has two programs under this policy, the **RAIE Program** and the **ALIEEP-AUM Resident Program**.

All ALIEEP staff, whether or not they handle a foreign educator program, and all candidates before participating in ALIEEP programs, must be aware of ALIEEP policies, the different programs, and the basic distinctions among them.

To ALIEEP program participants:

Foreign participants with a J-1 visa are NOT to replace any existing teacher or employee of the entity. ALIEEP programs have different requirements that are intentionally more restrictive than their compliance requirements. ALIEEP staff should have explained the ALIEEP designs; differences among programs, intents, qualifications, prerequisites, limitations, and benefits; and the differences between the J-1 non-immigrant visa and the H-1B employment-based semi-immigrant visa. ALIEEP participants must clearly understand the ALIEEP Policy from the application stage to prevent being misled or abusing one visa type for another. Once a specific program and visa type are decided, they should not be transferred to another program, or especially to another visa type, through changes in visa status before the application period or during participation.

To solidify the objectives and ensure compliance with the ALIEEP Policy, ALIEEP applicants must submit commitment statements confirming their understanding of their visa type and their intent to comply with each visa's requirements, including ALIEEP policies, along with a promise note for cultural exchange activities and a quarterly report.

Recruitment for Teacher Exchange and Internship Program (J-1 visa):

Building on its predecessor's accomplishments over the decades, ALIEEP has continued to form international partnerships through educational Memoranda of Understanding or Memoranda of Agreement. Other partnerships are also the result of efforts by ALSDE or ACHE. Strengthening its predecessor's international connections, ALIEEP has continued to hold an annual international convention in Korea, Vietnam, and India. ALIEEP will continue to expand its international network.

An applicant must be connected through existing international partnerships or be referred to ALIEEP by an international partner institution or its association. A J-1 Teacher Exchange applicant must be under existing relations, as an official recommendation is required.

Although a J-1 Internship applicant is not required to be affiliated with an established partnership, most applicants will be from international partner universities for their undergraduate students' practicum experience in their major.

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Recruitment for STEM Educator Program (H-1B visa):

As stated in the overview, ALIEEP H-1B facilitation supports the Alabama public university's foreign graduates who are qualified for teaching fields or have the potential to obtain a teaching certificate under the Alabama State Department of Education's Certificate Guidelines.

Therefore, its recruitment is conducted through referrals from the fourteen (14) Alabama public universities, and to meet the demands expressed by Alabama's accredited local public-school districts. ALIEEP communicates with those international offices, deans, or directors of various STEM programs. There are more supplies from the universities than ALIEEP can handle.

Selection Guidelines and Checklist:

Regardless of visa type, any staff member who handles an ALIEEP Educator Program must **refer to the ALIEEP Educator Program - Selection Guidelines**, cross-check all criteria items with evidence, supporting documents, or "N/A," followed by the staff member's initial and date, and upload the completed package to the designated shared folder in Teams.

Under the ALIEEP's internal policy, ALIEEP limits J-1 support to a member of a partner institution and also limits H-1B support to a graduate of an Alabama public university who has a valid OPT with at least two (2) months prior to the expiration of their Employment Authorization Document (EAD) under their F-1 visa, as stated in the ALIEEP Selection Guidelines.

All applicants should abide by the ALIEEP Administrative policies and procedures and submit a truthful application with accurate information. If selected, all participants must submit satisfactory supporting documentation on time and collaborate with ALIEEP staff to remain in good standing in the ALIEEP program.

Before finalizing a selection, the signing-off staff must ensure that all disclosures are collected. Those are not limited to, but include the ALIEEP Educator Program disclosure, Administrative Policy, each applicant's fee acknowledgement, financial/budget acknowledgement, pre- and post-orientations, and host institutional disclosures.

Operations:

Initial screening and document collection for all programs can be performed by staff, a full-time ALIEEP employee. For the J-1 visa program, all final checks before submission to SEVIS must be done by the RO or ARO for all qualified applicants. For the H-1 visa program, the Program Manager, a designated full-time employee, will send the qualified applicant's document package to the partner immigration firm as specified by the immigration firm.

Along with other supporting documents, all J-1 applicants shall submit their "***Visa Commitment Statement***," acknowledging the two (2)- year Home Residency requirement for the Teacher Exchange program, and their "Cultural Exchange Commitment," promising to submit a quarterly activity report for all candidates.

Although an H-1B visa does not require it, ALIEEP requires participants to submit the same statements as J-1 applicants: "*Pledge for Good Standing*" and "*Quarterly Cultural Activity Report*."

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Again, all staff members who handle an ALIEEP Educator Program must abide by the ALIEEP Policies, Selection Guidelines, cross-check all criteria items against evidence or “N/A,” and upload the completed package to the designated shared folder in Teams.

Staff Training and Continuing Professional Development:

The Executive Director shall ensure that **biannual training** is conducted for the ALIEEP staff on **22 CFR Part 62, 8 CFR Part 214, SEVIS and USCIS compliance**, Bridge USA, the ALIEEP Exchange Educator Program handbook, the Intern Training program handbook, and other relevant subjects. The staff must know what ALIEEP compliance is, what constitutes adequate evidence for a specific item or requirement, and how to distinguish between insufficient documents and genuine documentation, including how to assess various federal forms and alternative or supporting evidence. They must be able to evaluate all the evidence they collect.

The Executive Director will also ensure that the ALIEEP handbooks reflect the evolving compliance requirements for F, J, and H visas and relevant subject matters, including International Outlook standards, and related requirements.

Administrative Oversight and Internal Audits:

ALIEEP finance is partially subsidized by the Alabama State Educational Trust Funds and serves ACHE and ALSDE by implementing their international education policies. Therefore, ALIEEP policies, internal compliance requirements of a foreign program, or visa privileges may be much more restrictive than is commonly known or what each visa type presents.

The following explains internal audits, oversight by responsible personnel, training materials, and timelines for the **ALIEEP Audit Procedures** of ALIEEP Programs. A meeting can be virtual or in person; however, the **meeting minutes** from each meeting, including professional development and internal **audit reviews**, must be archived and uploaded to the shared folder in Teams.

The RO and the AROs shall hold a monthly meeting with assisting staff to address all J-1 program-related matters and check archived documents for new or updated J-1 packages in Teams.

The Academic Director or the Program Manager will hold a monthly meeting with staff to address all H-1B educator program-related matters, including communication with the immigration firm, local school superintendents, HR directors, or principals, and maintaining contact with the appropriate coordinator at the Alabama universities. They will also check archived documents of new or updated H-1B packages in Teams.

The Executive Director shall conduct a **quarterly audit** of all applicants' complete packages and ensure they meet SEVIS and USCIS compliance requirements.