



WESTERN NEW MEXICO UNIVERSITY

POLICY NAME	Immigration Sponsorship Policy	POLICY NO.	BA456
APPROVING BODY	President/Cabinet	VERSION NO.	01
RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT	Business Affairs – Hiring & Recruiting		
EFFECTIVE DATE	01-SEP-2026	REVIEW/REVISION DATE	NEW

PURPOSE:

This policy establishes Western New Mexico University's (WNMU) framework for employment-based immigration sponsorship. The purpose of this policy is to support the recruitment and retention of highly qualified faculty and other employees with critical skills, while ensuring institutional consistency, legal compliance, and fiscal responsibility.

This policy applies to all University units engaged in the recruitment, hiring, and employment of international personnel requiring immigration sponsorship or work authorization. It governs all processes related to immigration compliance, visa sponsorship.

This policy applies exclusively to full-time faculty positions - adjunct positions are not eligible for immigration sponsorship. Sponsorship for staff positions, requires prior approval of the University President.

POLICY:

WNMU recognizes that employment-based immigration sponsorship can be a strategic tool in advancing its academic mission. Immigration sponsorship is considered on a case-by-case basis, based on institutional need and academic or operational merit. Sponsorship is not guaranteed and does not create a promise of continued employment.

All immigration-related actions must comply with applicable federal and state laws and University policies. Final authority for immigration sponsorship decisions rests with the University.

GOVERNANCE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- **Human Resources (HR):** Serves as the primary administrator of immigration sponsorship requests, determines eligibility, and coordinates with legal counsel, secures funding approval, and complies with recruitment and documentation requirements.
- **Hiring Department:** Recommends potential applicants, and ensures hiring decisions are based on academic merit and institutional need.
- **External Immigration Attorney:** Represents WNMU in all immigration filings.

No department or individual employee may independently engage immigration counsel or file petitions on behalf of the University.

DEFINITIONS

- **United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS):** Federal agency responsible for adjudicating immigration petitions.
- **Sponsorship: University-**supported filing of employment-based visa petitions (e.g., H-1B, O-1, TN, J-1, E-3, OPT).
- **Lawful Permanent Resident (LPR):** An individual authorized to live and work permanently in the United States.
- **Hiring Department:** The academic unit initiating the faculty hire.
- **Premium Processing Fee:** An optional, accelerated service fee (from the Immigration Attorney) for certain employment-based petitions that expedites the filing process.

VISA EMPLOYMENT ELIGIBILITY

1. Determination of Visa Category - HR, in consultation with the immigration attorney and the hiring department, determines the appropriate visa classification.
2. Sponsorship Eligibility - WNMU may consider sponsorship for the following categories, subject to approval:
 - a. Full Time Faculty
3. All international faculty candidates must meet the same minimum academic and professional qualifications required of similarly situated U.S. faculty, in addition to any requirements imposed by federal immigration regulations.
4. Candidates must possess the **terminal degree** appropriate to the discipline (e.g., Ph.D., MFA, DMA, JD, MD), as defined by the hiring department and accrediting standards.
5. Degrees must be earned from an **accredited or internationally recognized institution**.
6. Foreign academic credentials must be **evaluated for U.S. degree equivalency** by a university-approved credential evaluation service prior to appointment.
7. Candidates must demonstrate relevant teaching, research, clinical, or professional experience consistent with the rank and track of the position (e.g., Assistant, Associate, or Full Professor).

LEGAL COUNSEL AND PROCESS

WNMU retains an external immigration attorney to represent the University in all employment-based immigration matters. Hiring departments must initiate sponsorship requests through Human Resources at hiring@wnmu.edu. Detailed procedures are outlined in the **SOP456_Immigration Sponsorship Procedures** available on the Business Affairs, Human Resources canvas pages.

COSTS AND FEES

The university is responsible for all required immigration-related costs and will not seek reimbursement from the employee. Costs may include, but are not limited to:

- Premium processing fees (if elected by the department; will be paid for by the hiring department)
- Legal fees
- Dependent Sponsorship - WNMU does not sponsor or file immigration petitions for dependents of employees. All dependent-related filings are the sole responsibility of the employee.

Funding approval is subject to the discretion of the Vice President of Business Affairs.

