Important Announcement including Frequently Asked Questions for International Students

March 12, 2020

Dear Students,

We understand you may have many questions pertaining to your F-1 or J-1 status and the University’s announcement that it will be transitioning to remote and online instruction. Please know that ISSS will continue to provide timely support to you throughout this period, and that your health and safety—as well as your immigration status—continue to be our top priorities.

We wanted to address some frequently asked questions below in hopes of alleviating some concerns you may have. If you need additional clarification, or have questions that are not answered below, please do not hesitate to reach out to our office. Now more than ever, it is crucial you check your albany.edu email address daily.

Q: Will courses moving online affect my F-1 or J-1 status?

A: No, though you still must continue to maintain full-time registration and participate in your classes (12 credits for undergraduates and 9 credits for graduate students). Please defer to your academic departments and instructors for further instructions about how each of your courses will continue to be delivered. While under normal circumstances F-1 and J-1 students have limitations for online coursework and distance learning, SEVP has issued guidance to permit schools to meet state and local health emergency declarations. Students who continue to make normal progress in a full course of study will continue to maintain F-1 and J-1 status. Should there be a reason you are required to go below full-time, please review the acceptable reduced course load authorization reasons and request form and contact ISSS@albany.edu for additional guidance: https://www.albany.edu/isss/89007.php. Students already approved for a reduced course-load who are continuing to maintain the same course registration at the time of reduced course load approval do no need to take further action at this time.

Q: I’m graduating this term, can I still apply for post-completion OPT?

A: Yes, students who are otherwise eligible for OPT may still apply for post-completion OPT. Remember that to be eligible you must be physically present in the United States at the time of application. Please be sure to carefully review the OPT requirements before applying (https://www.albany.edu/isss/87855.php).

Q: I want to stay in my on-campus residence hall, may I?

A: Yes, as of now campuses will remain open, including residence halls, offices, and dining services. Even if the campus were to have to close for some reason, all international students and other students who could not return home and currently reside in a residence hall could stay in the residence halls through the end of the semester and the University would make meal plan accommodations for these students. Students in residence halls that require spring break housing sign-up should make sure that they have completed the necessary forms to stay during the break.

Q: I want to go back to my home country and take my classes online from there; can I do that?

A: We understand that many students and their families are concerned given the global outbreaks of COVID-19. Students may choose to depart the U.S. at any time, but please be aware that deciding to depart the U.S. could impact your immigration status and/or your academic progress. Before making the decision to depart the
U.S., please consider a variety of factors. First, you need to consider whether or not you will have access to the resources needed back home to continue in your coursework. If you do not, you may need to withdraw from the course(s). Second, travel restrictions may continue to change over the coming months, which could prevent your timely return to the University for the current or future term(s). Third, a student may or may not be able to maintain status while outside the U.S.; several factors must be considered, including: your course registration; your ability to continue to make progress towards your degree; and the period of time during which you plan to be absent from the U.S. This may vary case-by-case, so please speak to an ISSS advisor before deciding to depart the U.S. this term.

Finally, future practical training eligibility (CPT/OPT, Academic Training) may be impacted if you choose to depart the United States and continue or complete your coursework from outside the U.S.

Q. What if I’m planning to travel?

A: Please refer to the already provided information regarding international travel on our website homepage, here: https://www.albany.edu/isss/, which includes new travel restrictions. For travel within the U.S., please use your best judgment by referring to local and state governments and their health departments for guidance.

Q: Will ISSS be open? What if I need help from an ISSS advisor?

A: ISSS will continue with normal hours and operations. We are open Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm, and we have walk-in advising on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 9am-4pm. You can also email us at ISSS@albany.edu or call at 518-591-8172 if you are unable to come in-person for advisement. Should advisement modes need to be adjusted we would let you know via email.

Q: What if I have a document request for ISSS, can I submit it electronically?

A: All document requests may be submitted electronically, either through an Eform or fillable PDF document which you can email to ISSS@albany.edu. You can access all forms on our website here: https://www.albany.edu/isss/forms.php.

Q: What if I have a document I need to pick-up from ISSS?

A: Students’ documents may be mailed standard USPS (no fee, but also will not be tracked and takes on average 3-12 business days to arrive) or sent express mail by ordering an E-ship label (see instructions here: https://www.albany.edu/isss/91191.php). Students who require an in-person pick-up may continue to do so during regular business days.

Q: Where can I find the most up-to-date information?

A: The University will continue to update its website (https://www.albany.edu/risk-management/coronavirus-covid-19-information) as will ISSS (https://www.albany.edu/isss/). Please continue to regularly check your albany.edu email address for any emails.

Should you have any concerns or questions not addressed above, please contact ISSS@albany.edu.

Sincerely,

The ISSS Team