March 13, 2020

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1. Greetings!

This is the Weekly ISSS Newsletter that we send out every Friday. It includes very important immigration updates that you must be aware of, as well as information about events happening on campus and in the area.

Are you a part of a student organization and want to see your event advertised to your fellow students? Please send the details and/or flyer to ISSS@albany.edu.

2. Important Announcements

International Travel and Travel Form Updates (related to COVID-19)

We recognize the concern of students and the University community regarding the coronavirus. We are also proud to have international students from all over the world at UAlbany, including from countries who have reported cases of the coronavirus.

The University has posted a FAQ page on the Coronavirus (COVID19) with additional information.

Students with health related concerns should contact University at Albany Student Health Services.

Several countries have reported outbreaks and/or cases or COVID-19 (Coronavirus) and the situation continues to develop globally. Students who must travel internationally should be aware that any country could impose travel restrictions at any time, and that these changes may be
given with little notice or predictability. Due to this, we advise students to first carefully consider the situation before choosing to travel at this time.

We ask that international students and scholars who are travelling internationally share their travel plans with us, including destination countries and flight information, so that ISSS will have access to your travel plan information in order to best support you as the situation develops. To access the form, click here.

Based on the Albany County and NY State Departments of Health guidance, the University at Albany is highly discouraging travel to countries or regions impacted by the coronavirus. Students who must travel during this spring break to impacted countries or regions are required to call UAlbany Student Health Services at 518-442-5229 before returning to campus. For more instructions on this critical process, please visit https://www.albany.edu/risk-management/coronavirus-covid-19-information (section heading beginning with “I am planning a trip or have returned form a trip to on the geographic areas…”).

Additional Resources are available below
• Reminders for Students Travelling (including documentation requirements)
• Resources for International Students from COVID-19 Affected Areas
• Psychological Tips for COVID-19 Concerns

Special Announcement on Worldwide Travel Advisory- Reconsider Travel

As of March 11, 2020, the U.S. department of State has issued a Global Level 3 Health Advisory urging individuals to reconsider all travel worldwide. The is following the World Health Organization’s (WHO) determination that the COVID-19 outbreak is a “Public Health Emergency of International Concern.”

Additionally, the U.S. has imposed a travel restrictions on travel originating from Europe. Therefore, international travel is highly discouraged at this time. Below are some of the current travel restrictions in place, though more may be imposed at any time:

• On March 11th, 2020, President Trump announced a 30-day ban on travelers returning from Europe from entering the U.S. This ban begins on Friday, March 13th. At this time it does not include the United Kingdom. U.S. citizens and permanent residents are exempted but non-immigrants are not. In this case, F, J and other non-immigrant international students are subject to this ban.
• Indefinite travel bans continue to be in place for travelers from China or Iran who have been present in either country within the past 14 days
• Based on the Albany County and NY State Departments of Health guidance, the University at Albany is highly discouraging travel to countries or regions impacted by the coronavirus. If you must travel, please note that NYS Department of Health has advised that “Student and faculty returning from currently impacted countries or regions of impacted countries will be required to be quarantined for 14 days upon return.” What constitutes a currently impacted country or region may continue to expand as the situation develops.

**Frequently Asked Questions for International Students at this Time**

Dear Students,

The below has been updated with a new statement from ICE’s Student and Exchange Visitor Program. Please review carefully. (updated 3/13/2020)

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 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 remote 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 remote 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.

On the night of March 12, 2020, the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) provided NAFSA with the following statement: “SEVP is committed to remaining flexible in allowing schools to make temporary procedural adaptations so nonimmigrant students can continue to make normal forward progress in their program of study. They can temporarily engage in distance-learning, either from within the U.S. or outside the country, in light of COVID-19. SEVP will provide updated guidance as the scope and length of this situation becomes more clear.”

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 you are completing your degree (for most bachelor’s and master’s students, this is on or before May 13, 2020) in order to apply. 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 remote 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. As per SEVP’s statement above, students may maintain status while outside the U.S. if he/she continues to be registered and making progress towards their classes. Before making the decision to depart the U.S., please consider a variety of factors. First, you need to consult your instructors to learn more about how your course will be formatted, and determine whether or not you will have access to the resources needed back home to continue in your coursework (think about whether or not you have reliable WiFi connection and technology; potential firewall issues; time differences causing inconveniences for course lectures or assignments, etc…). 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).

Finally, future practical training eligibility (CPT/OPT, Academic Training) may be impacted if you choose to depart the United States without continuing full-time registration for this term. If you are graduating this May and hope to apply for OPT you are not advised to travel at this time, as you must be physically present in the United States at the time you are completing your degree (for most bachelor’s and master’s students, this is on or before May 13, 2020) in order to apply.

**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/](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
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.

Fall 2020 International Orientation Assistant Application

Looking for a fun on-campus job this summer? ISSS is seeking Orientation Assistants for New International Student Orientation, August 16-August 21, 2020!

The overall objective of an Orientation Assistant is to provide a genuine welcome for new students and to assist them during the first days of their adjustment to the University and the Capital District. We consider the Orientation Assistants to be important members of the program and we expect the appropriate commitment of time and energy from each assistant. Students will receive a stipend of approximately $250 for approximately 22-24 hours of work.

Please go to https://tinyurl.com/OAFall2020 to apply. Applications are due by April 1st at 5pm. If you have any questions please contact isss@albany.edu.
New E-Forms Launched (Extension, Departure/Transfer, & STEM OPT Extension)

ISSS is happy to announce the launching of three new E-Forms on our website!

- Extension of I-20/DS-2019 Program End Date Request Eform
- Departure or Transfer Out Request Eform
- STEM OPT Extension Request Eform (for students currently on post-completion OPT only)
If you have questions about using these Eforms, please email ISSS@albany.edu or come in during walk-in advising hours.

**Sprintax Code for Taxes**

ISSS has purchased Sprintax tax software to help international students and scholars to file their 2019 federal tax return. Codes for Sprintax will be available on Monday, February 3, 2020. To obtain a Sprintax tax code, please email isss@albany.edu. Please include the following information in your email: first & last name, student id number, and the name of your employer. If you were not employed, please go to: https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f8843.pdf, to obtain form 8843. For questions, please contact ISSS.

### 3. Other ISSS Updates and Events

**OPT/CPT Workshop Schedule, Spring 2020- Reminder, OPT Form is now Online!**

ISSS has weekly employment workshops, either for CPT authorization or OPT authorization. Students must attend one of these workshops before applying for OPT. Remember that USCIS estimates up to 3-5 months for processing of an OPT application.

To view a full schedule, please click here: https://www.albany.edu/isss/assets/OPT_CPT_flyer_Spring_2020.pdf
Census 2020: What to Expect

Every 10 years, the United States conducts a census in order to take count of how many people live in each household. International students are part of this census count (https://2020census.gov/en/who-to-count.html). This data is used for a variety of reasons, including congressional representation and distribution of federal funds (https://2020census.gov/en/census-data.html).

Starting mid-March, you will begin to receive mail from the Census Bureau. By April 1, 2020, every home in the U.S. should receive an invitation to participate in the census. You can respond online, by phone, or by mail. More information is on their website here (https://2020census.gov/en/ways-to-respond.html).

The Census will ask questions about how many people live in a household, as well as the name, sex, date of birth and race of each household occupant. It will not ask about citizenship or immigration status. They will not ask about your Social Security Number, financial/banking information, or political affiliations. For more information on
what they will or will not ask, see their website here: https://2020census.gov/en/about-questions.html

The Census Bureau hires Census Takers who go door to door and will ask how many people live in each household. They will begin home visits in April and these will continue through May. You can verify someone is a Census Taker because they will have a valid ID badge with their photograph, a Department of Commerce watermark, and an expiration date. They may also carry bags and other equipment, which will have the Census Bureau logo on them. You can read more about Census Takers here: https://2020census.gov/en/census-takers.htm

Travel Signature Day Schedule- Spring 2020

Please remember that every F-1 and J-1 student must have a valid travel signature on their I-20 or DS-2019 in order to re-enter the United States after traveling outside. These travel signatures are usually valid for 1 year while you are a full-time student, though we recommend getting your I-20 or DS2019 signed every 6 months. Usually, travel signature requests take 5-7 business days. On our special travel signature days, however, we will sign the I-20 or DS-2019 on the spot. You can view the schedule here:https://www.albany.edu/isss/assets/Spring_2020.pdf. We recommend that every student attend one of these days, even if you don't have travel
4. University at Albany Events

Click [Here](#) for a full list of upcoming UAlbany events!

**Public Health Live! Person-Centered Healthcare in Planning and Practice**

*When: Thursday, March 19, 2020 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM*

*Where: Webcast*

Description: This webcast will present a conceptual understanding of person-centered planning and practice, focusing on improved individual outcomes and quality of life. The webcast will emphasize the universality of person-centeredness regardless of situation, life circumstance, or age, as well as how the philosophy and core concepts of person-centered planning are being put into practice in care management settings.