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](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/, 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: Effective through at least March 31st, ISSS is moving to a remote advising format. This means that while the physical office space will be closed, advisement will still be conducted remotely via email, phone and Zoom, and document requests will still be processed. See our updated office procedures for more detail: https://www.albany.edu/isss/assets/Remote_Advisement.pdf
**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](https://www.albany.edu/isss/forms.php).

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

A: See instructions for how to have a document mailed to you on our updated office procedures, here: [https://www.albany.edu/isss/assets/Remote_Advisement.pdf](https://www.albany.edu/isss/assets/Remote_Advisement.pdf)

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


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