

***updated: 07/07/2020 (see: f)**

“Q: Can continuing F and M students study online outside the United States and remain in Active status in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS)? Are designated school officials (DSOs) responsible for maintaining these records?”

A: Yes, continuing F and M students may remain in Active SEVIS status while studying online, outside the United States. As these students remain Active in SEVIS, DSOs are responsible for maintaining these student records.”

Theodore703: Hi so after talking to my Dean, it seems that for students stuck in their home countries and unwilling to come back, we will not be facing the revocation or cancellation of our visas. Rather our I-20 Sevis stuff will be cancelled and we need a new one. Which we would have needed either way. Right now for students stuck overseas the school's concern seems to be making sure we can take online classes legally. It seems dean kaneda and Hellman are looking into study abroad options and transfer credit stuff. (GroupMe message)

- I intend to remain in the US and maintain my SEVIS record active this Fall semester. Would my SEVIS record be terminated if the school shuts down in the middle of the semester and goes fully online due to an outbreak?
 - KD: No. Your SEVIS record will be active as long as the school operates hybrid for some duration of time in the beginning. You won't have to leave the country in the middle of the semester. But you are required to be enrolled in one or more in-person course. I hope you find at least one offline course that fits into your schedule.
- I cannot / do not want to come to the US for the Fall. I might take all online courses instead. Will my SEVIS record be terminated? Would this affect my ability to secure OPT application (for Summer 2021)?
 - KD: No. Your SEVIS record will continue to be active even though your F-1 Visa will be temporarily terminated. This has been the case in Fall semester (September to January) almost always. So you may still be able to get your OPT training and apply for OPT when you get back in Spring if you have been enrolled for the last 2 consecutive semesters.

- I intend to take leave of absence in the Fall. What happens to my visa / ability to secure OPT?
 - KD: Your SEVIS record will be terminated, but can be renewed for the spring because the termination would not last more than 5 months. Therefore, you won't have to go through the embassy to get a new F-1 Visa. However, this will affect your ability to apply for OPT for Summer 2021, because you won't have been enrolled for 2 consecutive semesters.
- I worry that the school goes 100% online in Spring semester. Has the school admin discussed offering a limited number of offline classes to international students just to keep the hybrid policy and allow the students to stay in the US?
 - KD: Yes, we discussed the option and are considering carefully.

The above screenshots are from a Brown student's correspondence with his OGS

Open Letter

Good morning,

We hope this message finds you well. We are writing on behalf of hundreds of international Hoyas currently in their home countries, as we believe our situation, like that of many others, demands immediate and sufficient attention.

Georgetown's international students constitute an integral part of our community. Our stated commitment to pluralism and diversity necessitates effective protection of our own international students from the threat of rigid and unfair treatment, both before and during the fall semester.

Two groups of international students are impacted by ICE's newly announced regulation, both of which need Georgetown's support: those currently in the United States, and those currently in their home countries. In the wake of the recent ICE guidelines, extensive media attention has been given to the former, but not nearly as much to those in their home countries. These

students, across all four years, do not have the sheer capacity to return to the United States, putting their academic status and F-1 visa status at risk.

Since the series of COVID-related announcements in March, some international students applied to stay on campus. In the meantime, many more followed the university instruction of returning to their permanent addresses, after which many finished their coursework under mandatory quarantine. During this pandemic that affected the lives of so many, international students made sure to abide by public health standards during this hard time.

As Georgetown has announced a hybrid model, students in their home countries are essentially forced to return to DC to maintain their F-1 status, as per the ICE guidelines for "hybrid model colleges" (though relevant definitions are still up for clarification).

This implies:

- Significant travel time and cost: many would have to spend 14 days in a third country prior to entering the US because of travel restrictions, along with additional quarantine requirements after arrival,
- Potential infection along the way and after arrival (many come from countries with much less cases than the US),
- No guarantee of on-campus housing (allowing for in-person classes) *even* if they arrive in the US, which is hence the prerequisite of legally staying in the country, and
- The risk of having to return home and lose their F-1 status all over again, should there be a wave of outbreak on campus. This also means that if that was to happen, the same issues we are demanding solutions for would arise more urgently and severely.

Meanwhile, some of our peers who are still in DC, despite wanting to return to their home countries, struggle with making decisions due to insufficient transparency on their visa status before/after their return.

Under the current situation, the only option many have, instead of giving in to the almost impossible challenges above, would be taking a gap semester / leave of absence, which, if forced, would be extremely disruptive to anyone's academic journey.

We think it would be irresponsible to put international students through this cruel process, just for one in-person course in DC (if we take the ICE guidelines literally), as the baseline needs to be that everyone should be able to stay at wherever they deem safe. These reasons are also why most of us overwhelmingly prefer staying in our home country.

In light of the already vulnerable position international students face, we thus call for the school to address the challenges faced by those in their home countries and prefer to stay there to take online classes.

Understanding that Georgetown can not reverse the ICE guidelines, we still believe there is a lot it can do to protect its international students located in their home countries. We suggest the following:

Clarifying relevant definitions:

While the official status of Georgetown's current academic plan is hybrid instruction, this definition of "hybrid instruction" demands urgent clarification. Since the option for in-person learning simply does not exist for us as of now, Georgetown needs to define "hybrid" for different groups, so as to maximize their/our benefit under these rigid and unclear immigration guidelines.

As previously explained, given that the vast majority of us prefer to stay at home, there are many ways in which Georgetown could leverage the inadequacies of current interpretations to *our* benefit. Ideas include:

- Outlining how the effective measure of remote, hybrid, or in-person depends on individuals' choice,
- Establishing guidelines for course selection if courses were to have a clear-cut category of "instruction status",
- Defining our version of the fall semester as completely online, or
- (if the previous fails) Offering options to make our learning experience somewhat "hybrid" (as mentioned later).

Ensuring students' visa status:

The academic statuses of those with active F-1 visas need to be maintained while they choose to participate in full online courses.

At the same time, Georgetown should support the visa application process for those without. For some of us with expiring visas or who have yet to apply for one (i.e. incoming freshmen), it is unlikely that they can acquire an F-1 visa on time. For instance, in China, it is nearly impossible for students to register for a visa interview before November.

Additionally, if the F-1 status of any student was suspended any time during the upcoming semester, Georgetown needs to provide due support and help such student(s) regain their legal visa status.

Supporting learning:

We ask Georgetown to enable international students to choose to participate in coursework wherever they deem safe / is logistically sound.

We suggest the following ideas:

- Study away: Collaborating with colleges in our international students' home countries. We could then enroll in these local colleges for the upcoming semester to later transfer credits back to Georgetown, similar to a study abroad program. (Cornell, Trinity College, Tulane, and UConnecticut are collaborating and allowing their students to go to their local universities)
- International in-person course: Establishing 1-credit in-person courses in these foreign countries (i.e. a seminar on "understanding COVID-19 from an international perspective"), so as to maintain the active SEVIS status of F-1 students.

We chose to attend Georgetown, hoping for a fulfilling education and a formative life experience. COVID-19 has been, indeed, formative in ways beyond our imagination, and we cannot bear to see our years of effort crumble before a few lines of potentially life-changing immigration guidelines.

As much as the struggles of international students physically within the US is important, we believe our underreported side of the story speaks volumes to the ways in which students look to, need, and *deserve* Georgetown's support. We demand action and active responses from the administration.

Last but not least, we appreciate your time and the hard work you have put into addressing *real* student concerns. In this demanding time, we need more. We are in contact with student organizations and hope to bring this issue closer to people's attention. Recognizing the urgency of the status quo, we expect an initial response to our demands by the end of the week (5pm EST, Friday, July 10). Thank you in advance!

Sincerely,

Students

1. Emily Li (SFS 22)
2. Wendy Xia (SFS 22)
3. Ariana Wang (SFS 22)
4. Ashley Fu (COL 24)
5. Zirui Wang (SFS 24)
6. Kelly He (MSB 23)
7. Yuge Shao (COL 24)
8. Yunming Zhang (NHS 24)
9. Steven She (COL 22)
10. Selina Xin (MSB 23)
11. Junyao Qin (SFS 22)
12. Jessica Shao (SFS 24)
13. Wenyu Zhu (COL 24)
14. Winnie Wang (MSB 22)

15. Harriet Bailes (COL 22)
16. Ray Xiao (MSB 22)
17. Lynn Xu (SFS 22)
18. Yuhao Xiao (SFS 24)
19. Theodore Chia (SFS 23)
20. Julia Tumangan (COL 22)
21. Pin Kanjanachusak (MSB 22)
22. Elise Harwell (SFS 22)
23. Emily Xu (MSB 22)
24. Victoria Chiu (SFS 22)
25. Jinru Liu (COL 21)
26. Philipp Moeller (SFS 23)
27. Harry He (SFS 21)
28. Suning Yang (MSB 21)
29. Aaron Yin
30. Yiming Zhao (MSB 22)
31. Joy Yue (SFS 21)
32. Luke Henkel (COL 23)
33. Francesca Drumm (SFS 21)
34. Monica Essig Aberg (COL 22)
35. Bushra Shaikh (SFS 21)
36. Judy Jiang (SFS 23)
37. Chloe Li (SFS 21)
38. Anika Venkatesh (SFS 22)
39. Yunheng Ni (COL 24)
40. Ari Kane (COL 24)
41. Shahmeer Nawaz (COL 24)
42. Tyler Salensky (SFS 24)
43. Sana Rahman (COL 22)
44. Yuki Cui (NHS 23)
45. Yuxuan Liu (NHS 23)
46. Jessica Fiadomor (COL 24)
47. Jordan Kramer (COL 22)
48. Sarah Bryant (SFS 22)
49. Dana Schaar (COL 22)
50. Camilla He (SFS 20)
51. Ava Gaus (COL 23)
52. Fadilah Farrin (NHS 24)
53. Amy Cazares (COL 24)
54. Tatsuki Kikugawa (SFS 23)
55. Arianna Garcia (COL 23)
56. Jiahan Jiang (COL 24)
57. Dominic Gordon (SFS 24)

58. Cynthia Yu (COL 24)
59. Cindy Wang (SFS 21)
60. Paige Plucker (COL 23)
61. Jessica Collins (NHS 21)
62. Advait Arun (SFS 22)
63. Sydney Wang (SFS 23)
64. Megan McLennan (COL 24)
65. Sarah Weber (SFS 23)
66. Kum Ho Chun (COL 23)
67. Angela Tan (SFS 23)
68. Makayla Jeffries (COL 23)
69. Katherine Zhuo (SFS 22)
70. Amira Fisher (COL 24)
71. Isabella Turilli (SFS 22)
72. Aiganym Nurakhanova (SFS 23)
73. Christine Ryzhov (SFS 23)
74. Omar Rahim (COL 24)
75. Jong Hak Won (SFS 21)
76. Deborah Han (COL 23)
77. William Leonard (COL 23)
78. Megan Wee (SFS 22)
79. Kari Nodine (COL 20)
80. Kate Freda (COL 22)
81. Yiman Wang (SFS 22)
82. Myiah Smith (SFS 20)
83. Ulie Xu (COL 21)
84. Erik Gong (COL 19)
85. Bianca Rodriguez (COL 21)
86. Rainah Adams (NHS 21)
87. Tracy Werick (COL 19)
88. Callia Karas (COL 20)
89. Wendy Boeker (COL 21)
90. Bakhita Fung (SFS 23)
91. Shirley Tang (SFS 22)
92. Andrea Ho (SFS 24)
93. Tina Ma (SFS 23)
94. Christine Kim (COL 22)
95. Rose Cheng (COL 21)
96. William Pramono (MSB 21)
97. Maxwell Sheremeta (SFS 22)
98. Julia Damski (SFS 24)
99. Elizabeth Ash (SFS 21)
100. Haeseong Lee (COL 21)

101. Dennis Beom June Kim (SFS 22)
102. Eric Ren (MSB 20)
103. Casey Chong (SFS 22)
104. Sam Li (SFS 24)
105. Alice Ye (COL 21)
106. Joshua Sirois (SFS 20)
107. Alejandra Parra (SFS 19)
108. Claire Claire Vithoontien (MSB 23)
109. Diana Tran (NHS 24)
110. Julia Staley (COL 24)
111. Peter Liu (COL 21)
112. Shadia Milon (SFS 20)
113. Sunni Luo (COL 22)
114. Naru Lertvitavaschai (SFS 22)
115. Minghui Lu(COL 21)
116. Yebin Won (SFS22)