

UFIC Notice to Exchange Partner Universities - April 7, 2020

Dear Partners,

I wanted to reach out to you during these challenging times and let you know how continuously grateful we are for your partnership and collaboration. In times like these, I'm reminded how special it is to have global perspectives available in my inbox every morning through hearing from you and your students.

I also wanted to take some time to address the questions that I have been receiving from many of you. And while we recognize that things are ever-evolving, here is what we know so far:

Current Exchange Students:

If we are currently hosting students from your institution, I've been updating schools individually on their students' plans as they notify me. As announced previously, all students have the option to complete the semester remotely, either in the US or back home.

For students that *currently remain in the US*, the US Department of State announced today that they would be granted an automatic two-month extension of their status in case of any travel-related issues or delays. This extends their visa status until July 1, 2020. I'll work with those students individually to make sure they understand the circumstances.

Nominations & Exchange Balance:

Our regular nomination deadline was this past week, *April 1*. In consideration of the current crisis, we can continue to accept nominations on a rolling basis. Please reach out if you need additional time to nominate your students.

In regards to addressing balance concerns, we remain committed to being flexible at this time and will work with you on a case-by-case basis as questions arise.

New Incoming Exchange Students:

Fall 2020 Exchange Program Policies: Have there been any changes to your plans to receive students this upcoming fall semester?

UF remains optimistic that campus activities will resume for Fall 2020, but as we all know, it is incredibly difficult to predict the future. At this point, there have not been any changes to our policies regarding accepting new incoming students for the Fall. The International Center will continue to monitor federal, state, and local guidance and act in accordance with the University's policies. I will provide regular updates to nominated students and partner institutions to address any changes.

We have almost 5 months before the start of the Fall semester, with classes scheduled to start August 24. I anticipate being able to update you in another month on whether news is the same or there have been updates.

To address the concern of costs, I would advise against any exchange program related expenses at this time. The UF application process has no cost associated, nor is there any cost associated with

orientation or UF International Center services. For the time being, I would not recommend students to attempt to book travel, or incur any other cost related to their future programs (ie. housing deposits, health insurance, visa fees).

Application Deadline & Process: Regarding the student application process, has there been any change regarding deadlines?

Students have already begun to bring up delays in collecting application documents, such as financial documents from banks, immunization records, and academic transcripts. Considering these concerns, we have extended the application deadline through **June 1**.

While application review / acceptance typically occurs on a rolling basis, I will refrain from issuing formal acceptance letters at this time. I'll provide another update by May about the acceptance process.

Issuing Acceptance Materials: Regarding the issuing of acceptance materials, should we still expect them to be sent as normal?/ The University is closed therefore unable to accept post/shipments, are you able to send acceptance materials/DS-2019 forms directly to students home addresses?

Similarly, to many, if not all, of your institutions, UF's campus is closed and my colleagues and I are working remotely. I kindly ask that you wait for an update next month regarding how hard documents will be handled. I can assure you that UF will work within the guidelines permitted to ensure acceptance materials be issued appropriately.

I will also have a better idea of new timeline for handling acceptance processes.

US Visa Concerns: Is there currently a delay in the processing time of visa application documents? Do you currently have any concerns about students receiving their visas in time for their placement?

J program sponsorship is regulated by the US Department of State. For background, US universities issue DS-2019 forms confirming sponsorship, in order for exchange students to apply for J1 visas. The Department of State is consolidating all COVID-19 related updates through banner advisors on their website: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel.html>.

As many of you are already aware, the most relevant concerns to exchanges on a federal level, are [US consular services have been suspended](#) for most nonimmigrant categories, including J1 visas, in addition to [entry restrictions being in place](#) for travel to the US.

We are receiving regular updates from the US Department of State. There is currently no set date when consular services will resume. While University sponsors (like UF) can continue to issue DS-2019 forms, students would not be able to move forward with visa applications. I expect more announcements to be forthcoming from US federal agencies in anticipation of the Fall academic year.

I will share with you updates as soon as we have them. And we will continue to interpret updates for their effect on exchange programs specifically .

Wishing you health and safety as we face the shifting landscapes in our personal and professional lives.
Thanks, as always, for your partnership.

Warmly,

Carolyn