FROM: Justin Jeffery, Director of International Student Life  
Robin Catmur-Smith, Director of Immigration Services

RE: Guidance for international students during suspended classes

DATE: March 13, 2020

Dear Students,

In the best interests of the health and safety of our students, faculty and staff, the University System of Georgia is temporarily suspending instruction for two weeks (starting March 16). UGA has also sent information regarding the requirement to self-quarantine if you have been outside the U.S. during spring break. You may not return to campus, if you have been outside the U.S., until you have completed a self-quarantine for 14 days from the date of entry to the U.S. Please refer to the Archnews message from 3/12/2020 for more information. If you have been outside the U.S. and do not have a place where you can safely self-quarantine, please contact the Department of International Student Life (isl@uga.edu).

We want to emphasize to you that international students currently enrolled at UGA, who remain in the U.S., will be able to maintain legal student status during this period. Your SEVIS record will remain active, and you will be in compliance with regulations governing your stay.

**International Students living on-campus**

Students who are currently away from campus on spring break are strongly encouraged not to return to University Housing. Residents currently on campus are asked to depart housing facilities by close of business on Friday, March 13, 2020. All students should plan to remain away from campus until March 29, 2020, and at this time, residents do not need to prepare to move all belongings out of their residence hall/apartment.

Although some international students are able to find accommodations away from campus during this time, we know there may be extenuating circumstances for some students preventing them from being able to leave campus by Friday, March 13, if at all. International students who have no other housing option and who have registered their need with University Housing will be permitted to remain on campus.

To register to remain in on-campus housing due to an extenuating circumstance, please complete University Housing’s registration form no later than March 16. If you are away from campus and are approved to return to your assigned space, you may return to campus no earlier than Sunday, March 15, at 8 a.m. If your hall is already opened during spring break, you may return to your assigned space as soon as your registration has been approved.

**Online courses & Departing from the U.S.**

Following the two-week suspension of classes, if UGA implements, for a time, online-only courses, you would be able to maintain legal status. Updated guidance issued from the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (eff. March 9, 2020) and the U.S. Department of State, (eff. March 11, 2020) allow a temporary relaxation of the limits on international F-1 ad J-1 students’ enrollment in online classes. The guidance allows international students to enroll fulltime in only online classes as opposed to in-person classes, if this is required by their institutions due to Covid-19 concerns. The students must still maintain full time enrollment and must complete all online classes. Students must be sure to update their physical address in the Immigration Services office “Compass” system (formerly “iStart”). Please note, that UGA has not made an official decision on the delivery method of classes beyond March 29 at this time. We encourage you to keep checking the UGA.edu website for the most up-to-date information.
International students who decide to depart the U.S. and return to their home countries may need to have their immigration SEVIS records terminated for “authorized early withdrawal.” If you choose to return to your home country, you may still participate in any online course offerings, as determined by the academic department and or the Registrar’s office. Please consult with these offices if you decide to return to your home country. Please also inform the UGA Immigration Services office of your departure, by emailing immigration@uga.edu. Note that depending on worldwide travel restrictions, and U.S. embassy closures, if you depart the U.S. you may have difficulties returning in a timely fashion, and may require a new I-20 or DS-2019 form issued from UGA Immigration Services, and a new student visa application at a U.S. embassy.

International students approved for F-1 Optional Practical Training, or J-1 students approved for Academic Training, should work with their employers to ensure they can continue to perform their work, in the event of employer shutdowns.

We understand that this is an uncertain and stressful time. The UGA International Student Life and Immigration Services staff are working hard to ensure that international students are given the most up-to-date information on policies and resources. Please do not hesitate to reach out to either department with your questions or concerns.

Immigration related questions: Immigration Services
706-542-2900 or email immigration@uga.edu
After hours immigration-related emergencies, call 706-252-2546

General questions or concerns: International Student Life
706-542-5867 or email isl@uga.edu

Be well, and take care.

Sincerely,

Robin Catmur-Smith
Director of Immigration Services

Justin Jeffery
Director of International Student Life