Third International Student Town Hall

July 24, 2020 Zoom Webinar

Panelists

- **Steve Mull**
  Vice Provost for Global Affairs
- **Mark Rhoads**
  President, McCandlish Holton PC; Director, Immigration Practice Group
- **Richard Tanson**
  Senior International Student and Scholar Advisor & Program Manager
- **Susan Davis**
  Associate Vice President of Student Affairs, Liaison to University Counsel
- **Rachel Most**
  Associate Dean for Undergraduate Academic Programs & Professor
- **Phil Trella**
  Director, Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs

Moderator

- **Dudley Doane**
  Director of International Studies Office

Event Details: [Link](#)

Video with Edited and Hardcoded Subtitles: [Link](#)

Video with Automatically Transcribed Subtitles: [Link](#)
Dudley Doane

Good morning everyone. This is Dudley Doane. Welcome to this third Town Hall that we at the University of Virginia are holding for our international students, their families, and members of the University faculty and staff. With us this morning we have Vice Provost for Global Affairs, Ambassador Steve Mull; Senior International Student and Scholar Advisor, Richard Tanson; Immigration Attorney, Mark Rhoads; Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs in the College of Arts and Sciences, Rachel Most; Mr. Phil Trella, who oversees Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs at the University; and Associate Vice President for Student Affairs, Susan Davis.

As we have in that previous Town Halls, we’ll begin with each presenter offering some comments and then turn to Questions and Answers. So let’s begin with Vice Provost Mull:

Stephen Mull

Good morning, good afternoon, good evening, wherever you are! Thank you so much for joining us today. We’re so happy to be able to have the chance to spend some time with you, to hear your concerns, and answer any questions you have. And we also are very excited to remind all of you that one month from tomorrow, the Fall semester will begin, and we’re really looking forward to welcoming as many of you as possible here in Charlottesville or to teaching and instructing you online, if that’s the option that you choose for the Fall. As we communicated before, it’s going to be a semester unlike any other we’ve had at UVA before, but it’s going to be a great UVA semester, and I hope you share our enthusiasm for a really tremendous semester to come.

1 This audio transcript was automatically transcribed for Zoom by Otter.ai, with manual corrections and editing for clarity and brevity by the UVA China Office.
As you know, earlier this month, we had some concerns about what US Immigration policy would be for those who decided to choose 100% online instruction for classes this fall, and when that rule first came out we swiftly got the agreement of all 12 of our schools that each of you—as international students—can count on some in-person instruction to allow you to come to the United States, to get a visa, and to remain here in students status. The US Government decided to reverse that requirement that everyone have some kind of in-person instruction, but our guarantee to all of you still stands. We understand that the US Government has not yet communicated guidance on all of this to visa officers in embassies and consulates or to border guards. So just to make sure you have an added degree of security, yesterday the International Studies Office sent to each of you an official letter that you should keep with you when you apply for a visa, or when you cross the border, underscoring that you will have in-person instruction here, and we think that will help eliminate any confusion or any doubt about your eligibility for a visa or crossing the border. So I’ll stop there and just close to say how excited we all are to start the semester with all of you, and I’ll turn the floor over to Richard:

Richard Tanson

Thanks, Steve. I don’t have much to add to that. That was so well said. I will, however, amplify that if you do encounter concerns (as many of you have done so far), please reach out directly to the International Studies Office. If you have any kind of urgent situation, we do have a 24/7 phone line, so you can reach us at any time—day or night—and that number is: +1 (434) 982-3010. And I look forward to your questions this morning.

Mark Rhoads

I have nothing to add to anything that Richard Tanson ever says, other than, “I agree.”

Dudley Doane

And thanks again for joining us from Richmond this Morning, Mark. Phillip Trella:

Phillip Trella
Good morning, everyone. My name is Phil Trella. I direct the University’s Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs and serve as Associate Vice Provost. I’m happy to join you this morning. I know that there are many questions coming from our graduate students, who are located abroad and looking forward to come for the beginning of the semester. I’m here to help coordinate and answer those questions. As I’ve said before, we have about 8,000 graduate and professional students located across the University in 80 or 90 different programs, and 60 PhD programs, so that necessarily the answers to some of your questions will involve coordinating closely with those programs. But as far as it concerns University Policies & Procedures, and being able to help coordinate your questions to get an answer to them, we are absolutely doing that, and I’m happy to answer any of the additional questions you might have this morning. Thanks.

Dudley Doane

Okay, thanks very much. And let’s move on to Susan Davis, Associate Vice President for Student Affairs, please:

Susan Davis

Hello everyone. Warm welcome from our team in Student Affairs. We support your life outside the classroom and this also includes Housing and Residence Life, where you’ll be living if you’re going to be living on Grounds, and our Student Health and Wellness Center. And so I know you have a number of questions related to how you will navigate the University’s quarantine and testing requirements upon arrival. We have a good plan in place to guide you on how to do that, and we’re going to talk through that further today, Dudley.

Dudley Doane

Thank you very much. And I think Dean Most is still not with us quite yet, so let’s move to questions and responses from the panel. First question:

“Is there any clarity on when we will be allowed entry into the US after the start of the semester?”

And a similar question/related question we’re seeing is:
“When will we know if CBP [US Customs and Border Patrol] allows new international students to arrive late on Grounds? In the case that we can, who should we let know?”

Richard Tanson

So there’s a few considerations there. First of all, if you’re going to arrive late, and by late we mean maybe a week to two weeks after, any kind of late arrival requires at least two sets of permissions: 1) you need the permission of your School of enrollment or Department, if you are a graduate student; and secondly, you need a revised Form I-20 [Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status], because you really are not supposed to enter the United States after the start date that appears on every I-20 that we’ve issued. So you’ve got to communicate with the appropriate School or Department, and also inform us of your plans to arrive late. So what we’re looking for is that you have permission from the Department to arrive late, or the converse would be you’ll get the recommendation to just stay outside the United States for the Fall, and confirm for the Spring. The permissions that you get from the Department have to be forwarded to us before we will revise any I-20 document. So the main thing is the appropriate I-20 document, the letter that we issued yesterday, and hopefully you’ll be able to transfer CBP at the port of entry. But if not, you will use that special—that magic—phone number that we just gave you 24/7: +1 (434) 982-3010. Mark, do you have anything to add on negotiating with CBP?

Mark Rhoads

No. I think that the advices you just gave is exactly what any students should understand, and that is it is definitely a fluid situation, but if you come armed with those materials you will give yourself the best chance of being admitted to the US.

Dudley Doane

And Richard, we have a related question coming in from one of our team members in the ISO [UVA International Studies Office], which should clear up confusion here:

“How do students prove they have permission?”
Richard Tanson

As I just mentioned, we need something from the Department or from the Admissions Office that shows us that they have permission. In other words, we’re not going to unilaterally change an I-20, unless we have that concordance with the Department or School. In the case of undergraduates, this would include other schools of enrollment after the start of classes.

Dudley Doane

“Can a rising Fourth-Year take classes from their home country in Fall and still be eligible for OPT after graduation? Would they have to return for Spring 2021? What implications does this have for H-1B filing?”

Richard Tanson

Well, I’ll leave the H-1B [non-immigrant visa for specialty workers] to Mark, but I’ll start with the first part of your question. If you are a continuing student, so in this case a rising Fourth-Year, and you stay outside the United States for the Fall, but remain enrolled online full-time, then you retain your F-1 [non-immigrant student visa] status, and you retain your eligibility for OPT [Optional Practical Training], or in the case of students who are not rising Fourth-Years, for CPT [Curricular Practical Training]. So you do manage that continuity of status if you’re outside for the Fall. Now, bear in mind—and this is very important—the guidance that has been offered is for the Fall semester only. There is no guidance for Spring. That’s first of all. Secondly, in lieu of any further guidance, it is likely (at least at this point) that you would have to be here for the Spring semester. I know Mark has something to say about this, but one of the reasons is that according to the instructions on the Form I-765 [Application for Employment Authorization], which is the form you file for OPT, you have to be in the United States to file that form. Mark:

Mark Rhoads

I definitely agree with that. In my view, it is very clear that the I-765, which is the application you file to get a work authorization card for OPT, you need to be in the United States in order to file it, but if you are outside the United States, you have no ability to travel in, and you are eligible for OPT, if you file the application from outside, the worst thing that happens is they deny it—you lose the filing fee. There’s no other ramifications. So if that is your only option, you might as well give it a try and see what happens. With regard to H-1B, H-
1B is a very common work visa available to international students after graduation (the most common work visa in the United States). You do not have to be physically present in the United States, in order for an employer to file an H-1B petition. So the fact that you are outside the United States has no impact on your employer’s ability to file for an H-1B for you.

Dudley Doane

Next question:

“My apartment is being subleased out until the August 15, which is less than 14 days before classes start. Will UVA be able to provide me housing for the quarantine period, in the case that I arrive 14 days prior to the start of classes, just for the quarantine period? Will there be housing facilities for off-Grounds students, and will there be housing facilities for off-Grounds students who test positive for COVID-19?”

Susan Davis

Maybe the best way to tackle this is to start by walking through the general game plan with quarantine and then we can take those specific questions. Again, we want everyone to use ISO as your gateway. We want you to have a warm welcome and a warm arrival in the United States and your quarantine period will begin when you arrive in the US. It’s really helpful for you to remain in touch with ISO, so they know that they have your confirmed flight plans and your confirmed arrival time. The other question that you’re going to be asked, relevant to the question you just read, Dudley, will be: “Where do you plan to live for the coming year?” In most instances, students are going to be able to go directly to the location where they plan to live for the upcoming year. And that is really based on you having a fairly isolated bedroom and bathroom and have an ability to self-quarantine, during this 14-day period. That may be the case off Grounds, and it sounds like it isn’t for this particular student, so I’ll get to that in a moment. But we’re hopeful that will be possible for most of our off-Grounds students. For our on-Grounds students, especially our graduate students, many of you will also be able to continue straight to a residential location on Grounds, because typically you’re living in an apartment style residence and you have a more isolated living situation. So Student Affairs is working with ISO very closely upon arrival, so we can direct you very individually about where you can go to begin to serve this 14-day quarantine period. When you arrive, you will also be provided directions for how to request the University’s testing kits. This is a mail-in program, and the reason
we have to structure it this way is not just for international students, but for our US students who are also abroad right now, these kits cannot be sent to a non-US address. So upon arrival, again, you’ll get directions through ISO how to request that testing kit. We want you to request it immediately as you arrive. And you’ll be provided that kit, and at about day seven of your quarantine period, we’re going to ask that you complete that kit (self-administered) and return it. And again, there’ll be very clear directions for how you would accomplish that. And then assuming you test “negative,” you would be cleared for any kind of in-person learning or activities. If you test “positive,” you will need to remain in isolation, at that point, for a 10-day period. So these are the general ground rules.

In terms of if you’re not in a living situation such as this student, where you can actually go immediately to your permanent location for the year, Student Affairs and ISO are going to be guiding you for options that you do have. So for our off-Grounds students, we do not have the ability to house you on Grounds temporarily, or for this quarantine period. However, we have a list of hotels that have discounted rates, and there may be other options that we can work on with you, once we know your arrival time, and where you might otherwise be able to go to serve this period. For our students who are on Grounds, or coming to an on-Grounds site, and may not be able to quarantine if they’re in a more traditional Residence Hall, with a roommate and a hall-style bathroom, we have availability to place you in a quarantine space that the University will maintain, but if that becomes full, then we are going to guide you similarly to other options.

**Dudley Doane**

Thanks very much. Comments from any other among the panelists on this topic?

**Richard Tanson**

Susan, can you clarify when the quarantine period begins? Is it arrival in Charlottesville or arrival in the US?

**Susan Davis**

Arrival in the US. But Richard, as I’ve said, we really want students, even prior to arrival, to communicate with your team, so we know where they are arriving, and when they’re arriving. For example, if they’re coming into a
different port of entry, there may be an option, if they had a family member or they had other relatives, where they actually could serve their self-quarantine. Because it may be difficult for them to do that in Charlottesville, we want to work with them very individually to accomplish that. And the other thing I just want to stress to our students and our families, two main points: remember, the University is going to have full, remote learning options. So even if you can’t arrive until two weeks before the start of the semester, due to a lot of complications that we know you’re experiencing, you can begin, even after arrival in the US while you’re in self-quarantine, you can begin your classroom instruction remotely. So you won’t miss that time. This is a process designed to save in-person instruction, but you can begin your remote instruction as soon as that begins. And secondly, I know that there are a lot of unpredictable challenges: Will you clear? Will you test positive? Will you not be in a living situation that allows for quarantine or isolation? I want to assure all families, we are never going to allow students to not have an option. So we will be supporting them throughout this process. It may not always be the preferred option, it may be an option that carries some costs (including a hotel), but we will walk students individually through the options they have and make sure they get to a supportive option.

Richard Tanson

Let me just add to that, Susan, that lest all of you start emailing the ISO as soon as this meeting is over, telling us your travel plans, please don’t. We have a survey that’s ready to go and will be delivered to all of our students. And that’s how you will indicate to the ISO what your travel plans are. Secondly, we’ve gotten these questions already about late arrivals. Do try, by going to your consulate’s website, to gain an Emergency Appointment, as being a student with impending enrollment is—yet again—a criterion for an Emergency Appointment. So even if you’ve got an appointment that’s later than you want, I would certainly suggest trying to get a new one.

Dudley Doane

And Richard, could you let us know, is that an option for students around the world?

Richard Tanson

I think it’s fairly uniform. I think it’s just the procedures that are different, but the criteria are the same, for the most part, with consulates around the world.
Students had been frustrated, up until now, because “impending enrollment” was removed as a reason for an Emergency Appointment with the July Guidance. Now that that July Guidance has been rescinded, being an impending student is—once again—cause for an Emergency Appointment. Do you agree, Mark?

Mark Rhoads

Richard is absolutely correct that you need to contact the Embassy where you would apply, or the consultant where you would apply, for a visa. Consulates typically have different procedures. The standard for applying as a student will be the same, but the process for applying may be different, and as Mr. Tanson pointed out, even if you have an appointment later, sometimes earlier appointments cancel, and you can take a canceled slot. So I recommend keeping in close contact with your Embassy or Consulate.

Dudley Doane

Okay, and just to let everyone know the University FAQs for Students were updated last night to reflect this information that Susan Davis just shared on quarantine and arrival. So if you go to the Public Health and Safety section, you should see this revised information in this new FAQ. Next question:

“If I’m a graduate student with a full scholarship from UVA, and I have both the Social Security Number and a US bank account, but I do not yet have an F-1 visa. Will I be able to get my stipend, if I do not travel to the US this semester?”

I think this is for you, Phil Trella:

Phillip Trella

So let me preface this by saying that, of course, the usual policies on graduate students receiving funding and indeed working on Grounds, require them to be here at the University and in the United States. Given the situation that many of our international students are in, where you are in your home countries and not able to get here on time, we’ve been working to carve out a set of provisions that would allow students in certain scenarios to receive funding from the University while they are abroad. These provisions are for at least a limited period of time—for the fall semester—and are limited to students who are outside of the US due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and it
allows them to receive funding if they have meet four basic criteria, and those criteria are: first and foremost, you have to have an F-1 visa (you have to have a valid F-1 visa that provides you with work authorization within the US); you have to have a US bank account; you do need to have a tax identification number of some sort, so a Social Security Number or an ITIN number [Individual Taxpayer Identification Number], for example; and finally, you must not be in an OFAC [Office of Foreign Assets Control] barred country. So if a student does not meet the first criteria, which is to have a valid F-1 visa, then I’m afraid it might not be possible to deliver funding in the form of a stipend or wages to that student, or at least to that student’s US bank account. That said, if a student does not meet those four criteria, and let us say you are a student planning to begin your coursework online; you’re in your home country; and you don’t yet have your F-1 visa, the School of enrollment or the Department (if they choose to do so, and assuming that that the school is committed to providing the scholarship) can at least fund the tuition and fees on behalf of the student, so that you could start your coursework online, while not having to pay for the tuition and fees, and then wait until the F-1 visa is provided. And once those other four criteria match up, then perhaps the stipend can be released, or wages, depending on what that scenario is. Again, for students who are in these specific scenarios, I invite you to reach out to me directly. We want to work with your department and with your school to make sure that we’re providing the best set of options for you that are aligned with the best academic accommodations that we can provide, along with the best financial accommodations we can provide. And all that needs to be done in accordance with Immigration regulations and the Finance and Compliance regulations that the University is required to meet. Again, please feel free to reach out to me directly, and I will work with you and your Department to figure out what the best set of options is.

Dudley Doane

The next question, Steve, I think this is for you:

“Are there any updates or is there any news on the Go Local option to attend a local university in China, rather than UVA this fall?”

Stephen Mull

Thanks very much. And I want to thank those of you from China who are in our audience. We’ve received your petition asking us to explore options for you to remain in China, or a different array or a wider array of options, and we
have some very exciting options that we will be communicating in the coming days. So please stay tuned. We’ll get something out to you in the next couple of days.

**Dudley Doane**

The next question involves health insurance:

“What should I do with the health insurance if I’m going to do the Fall semester remotely from my home country and travel to the US for Spring 2021?”

I think this is for you, Susan:

**Susan Davis**

So if you’re going to remain abroad for this Fall semester, you are exempt from satisfying our insurance requirements. So if you’re a returning student, you know that about this time every year (and this just began July 20), there is a process under which you’re required to let us know what your health insurance plan is (our Hard Waiver process). So in the Fall, if you’re going to remain abroad, you will be exempt from that requirement. If for some reason you’re getting email communications, and you are remaining abroad, please contact Student Health directly and let them know that. But we believe we have identified that list, and so I’m hopeful that you’re not receiving them. And in Spring if you decide to arrive and you wanted to join the Aetna Student Health Plan, you could do that then, and our colleague in Student Health, Kellie Gildersleeve, is our Billing and Insurance Manager and will be very happy to have direct contact with students who have insurance questions.

**Phillip Trella**

Can I jump in with a couple points on grad students and Health Insurance? So if you are a graduate student who’s going to be in a Graduate Assistantship, meaning working as a GRA [Graduate Research Assistants] or as a GTA [Graduate Teaching Assistants] from your home country for a portion of the Fall semester, and if you meet those four criteria: if your Department has decided that you could continue to serve on a Graduate Assistantship; you have a valid F-1 visa that would provide you work
authorization; the US bank account; and the ITIN and the Form I-9 [Employment Eligibility Verification] paperwork, then a portion of your support normally would also be the Student Health Insurance Subsidy. If you meet those criteria, we could in fact provide you the subsidy as a form of financial aid. However, I would want students in those scenarios to just clarify with their departments. Student Affairs has made it possible such that we believe that we could begin that insurance upon your arrival to the United States. So it may be possible for us to deliver that subsidy when you get to the US, but I think we would want you to work with us to clarify what the best options for you are in that scenario.

**Dudley Doane**

Great. So to reiterate, a student who decides to arrive in January, rather than August, can enroll in the Aetna plan in January, and any student who will not be here in the Fall is not expected to carry the UVA Student Health Plan or meet the Hard Waiver Requirement. Next question I think involves Mr. Tanson and Dean Most (Rachel Most), who I believe has joined us:

“I’m an initial student who cannot enter the US this semester. Can we register for fewer than 12 credits? The SIS [Student Information System] system does not currently allow dropping classes to below 12 credits.”

And then there’s a related question from the student on Pre-Entrance Health, but let’s deal with the course load question first, please.

**Richard Tanson**

So if you are a brand new student—in other words, you have not set foot in the United States and established F-1 status—then the question is entirely academic, because you’re not trying to sustain F-1 status, because you don’t have it. But there are academic consequences that Rachel will talk about in a minute. If you are a continuing student, unless it is your last semester and you have permission from the ISO, you cannot be part-time. You have to be a full-time student. If your intent in the Fall is to study at the University and to maintain the F-1 status that you’ve already gained, then you do have to be full-time.

**Rachel Most**
So for new students, I think your best two options are either to enroll as a full-time student in 12 or more credits, or to be what we call a true part-time student, and take no more than six credits. So that might be two three-credit courses or a four-credit course and a two-credit course. Because if you take any credits over six and under 12 means you still pay full-time tuition, but that you incur probation for not carrying a full course load. So you would use a full-time semester—you’re only allotted eight—and you wouldn’t make progress toward the degree the way we expect. But if you’re part-time that semester it doesn’t count. You pay by the credit and yet you’re earning six credits, and I believe there’s a reduced fee for that as well. So that would be my advice: for returning students, just what Richard said, unless it’s your final semester, then your options are really a true part-time (no more than six credits), or to carry 12 or more credits. I’ll also add that students who do not pay full-time tuition in the Fall, are not eligible for the January term course. That January term course is only included for students who pay full-time Fall tuition.

Richard Tanson

Let me just quickly add: if you are a continuing student, and it’s not your last semester, and there is a legitimate medical reason for you to go part-time, then please be in contact with our office [International Students and Scholars Program]. There is another option that we can exercise in that case.

Dudley Doane

Rachel, could you remind us what students who are interested in being part-time (true part-time students) should do in terms of communicating that?

Rachel Most

All students, even if you’re a new student, have an Association Dean in the College of Arts and Sciences. If you’re not sure who that is; if you can’t figure it out by looking at your Housing and our website, which can be confusing, please email, askthecollege@virginia.edu, and we’ll let you know who to contact. If you are not coming to Grounds in the Fall, we will assign you a Dean sometime in mid-August. Your Dean is based on where you live, but we will have several hundred students not living on Grounds, who will still have a Dean.

Dudley Doane
“Pre-Entrance Health Form is delayed for us, but the SIS system still shows them on the To-Do List. Can it be cancelled so that we can complete the Form when we have an expected date to enter the US?”

So I think this is for Susan Davis and possibly Dean Most:

**Susan Davis**

Thank you. That’s good for me to know. It is absolutely true that your Pre-Entrance Health Form requirements are delayed until your arrival. I frankly was not aware you were still seeing that in your To-Do List in SIS. And so we can look to rectify that, and we’ll plan to do that.

**Rachel Most**

I’ll just add that I don’t think it’s interfering with any action you need to take in SIS right now. It’s not what we call a “hold” or a Negative Service Indicator (that’s our SIS-talk for a “hold”). It’s just showing us a To-Do, so until we get that removed, if you don’t need to do it, I don’t think it’s doing any harm.

**Susan Davis**

It may just remain there because they’ve loaded that requirement, and obviously if you’re having any difficulty navigating SIS or it’s interfering in any way with your ability to navigate Enrollment, do let us know.

**Rachel Most**

Or contact Student Health directly, since they’re the ones that would need to review if it did result in a “hold” that was preventing you from adding and dropping classes, then they would need to take that off.

**Dudley Doane**

The next question I will tackle:

“Will J-Term classes also be offered in the hybrid format with an option for people who want to take classes from their home country?”

The answer is “Yes.” Online study will be possible in J-Term [January Term]. More information to be coming your way regarding J-Term in the next few weeks. Mr. Rhoades, this is a question directed to you:
“I am a transfer student inside the US, starting a new program. Is there any requirement for an in-person class?”

**Mark Rhoads**

There’s no requirement for in-person classes at all under the current Guidance. You can do 100% online.

**Dudley Doane**

“Do you foresee any difficulties for international students returning to their home countries from Charlottesville mid-semester or during the month of December after finals, and will their entry back to the US for J-Term and Spring be restricted in some way?”

**Mark Rhoads**

This sounds like a crystal ball question, and that is asking us to foresee the future. Obviously departing the United States and returning to your home country will depend on whatever restrictions your home country imposes on returning citizens. The United States won’t have any concern about you departing. It’s just a question of whether or not you’re going to have to quarantine or whatever other restrictions your home country will have. In terms of returning to the United States, as things stand right now, whenever you traveled internationally, you need to make sure that you have a valid visa, and you need to make sure that you have an I-20 that is endorsed for travel. If you have those things, under current law and regulation, you can return to the United States. Could that change based on a whim, or a 2:00 A.M. tweet from the White House? Yes, it could. But, as things stand right now, you should be able to return to the United States.

**Phillip Trella**

Can I add something about graduate students, related to traveling from outside of the United States? The provisions that I talked about earlier (allowing students to receive their stipends and their wages, if indeed they are participating in a Graduate Assistantship) generally require them to be within the United States. And the provisions that we developed are for students who are not able to get to the United States, and who are outside the US currently...
and within their home countries. And so we have gotten some questions from students who are currently here in the United States, asking whether or not they would be able to return to their home countries and continue to participate in an Assistantship to receive their wages or their Fellowship stipends. The answer to that question is “no.” The baseline guidance that we provide for students who are in employment relationships with the University is that if they’re earning wages or receiving stipends they need to be in the US. If they’re performing employment services for the University that needs to happen at the University. Again, we’ve created a special set of guidance and provisions for students who are not able to get here. But if you are currently here, that guidance and those provisions are not permission to then leave the country to engage in your Assistantship duties remotely from outside of the United States. So just to be clear, if the questioner is a graduate student, who is in an Assistantship or receiving wages or Fellowship stipend, and wanted to leave the US mid-semester, there would be ramifications to their Assistantship appointment. And so I would want them to coordinate very closely with their departments, and to think about those potential ramifications in terms of their employment at the University and they’re receiving wages. So again, what we have developed for students receiving wages and stipend are for students who are outside of the country and who are unable to get here. It is not permission to exceed the University’s normal provisions to work and receive stipend and funding abroad. And again, if that’s unclear to anyone, I encourage you to reach out to me directly, and I’ll be happy to coordinate with your home School and your Department to make sure that you’re aware of exactly what the options are for you in terms of receiving the stipend and the wages, if that is indeed part of your current package.

**Dudley Doane**

Susan, do you want to add anything on behalf of the University with regard to recommendations on mid-semester travel for anyone and for any travel domestic or international?

**Susan Davis**

So we are really encouraging students upon arrival—and this is not unique to our international students—that when you come, please do stay. There is not yet a policy in place that absolutely prohibits that, but all the effort that is going into your safe arrival, a continuation of that is that you not travel a great deal once you arrive, because obviously that increases the likelihood of the spread of the virus and returning it to our community. I commented a little bit
on this in the call last week, when we were taking questions about will international students be able to remain in Residence Halls over the extended November break and into January. And yes, we are absolutely going to allow for that, because the purpose is we want to limit travel. So if you truly are going to stay put, we want you to stay put, and we’re going to support you to stay put. So I would just really urge everyone to please, when you do arrive, to not travel extensively out of our local community.

Dudley Doane

And a gentle reminder to everyone that travel restrictions limiting entry to the United States for travelers from certain parts of the world are still in place as are CDC [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] guidelines on quarantine, and we do not know when those will change.

“If I choose to take a Gap Semester, am I still able to attend classes in the Spring and next Summer as I wanted for this Fall?”

Rachel Most

If the Office of Admission has approved a Gap Semester for you, then you would start your study at UVA either in person or online in the Spring. You’d be eligible to take Summer courses after that. Some students have requested a Gap Year. That also needs to be approved by the Office of Admission. And during that time, Admission restricts you to taking no more than two courses. We can’t tell you whether we would take that credit or not, so you kind of proceed at your own risk if you’re studying somewhere else during that time. You definitely do not want to take more than that, or the University will consider you to have matriculated at another school, and that would cause you to forfeit your admission. So please work with Admissions closely if you need a Gap Semester or a Gap Year. Depending on your School of enrollment, it may require a Gap Year, because of the way they schedule classes. In Arts and Sciences, which is the biggest School, a semester is okay.

Richard Tanson

Dudley, was that question specifically for new students? Our students often use that terminology, if they are continuing students, but they want a “gap” a semester or “gap” a year.
Rachel Most

Well, we don’t use the term “Gap Year” for returning students. If you are a returning student and you want to take a semester off, we call that a “Leave of Absence.” That is something all undergraduates can apply for in SIS (the Student Information System). It’s an e-form called, Leaving the University. And it will ask you a couple of questions about how much time you want to take off in why.

Dudley Doane

Mary Ann Winecoff is the contact in Undergraduate Admissions for this, and her email is: maw6d@virginia.edu. And this will appear on the transcript of this session today.

Phillip Trella

For graduate students, this is a discussion that you’d want to have with the Director of Graduate Studies, with your Department, and with your Program. So again, these Leaves of Absence are granted by Schools, and by Departments, and Programs. So if that’s something that you’re considering, be in touch with your Director of Graduate Studies or your Dean, whoever it is who’s overseeing your Program, to work through that process.

Richard Tanson

I have to add something to this, Dudley, and perhaps most importantly to the international students: if you are a continuing student and you take a Leave of Absence, you will lose your F-1 status. So that’s very important to understand that. You will lose your F-1 status. It will be terminated. So that’s a discussion that you definitely would want to have with our Office [International Students and Scholars Program] if that’s something that you contemplate. The implications of losing status are that your I-20s would be cancelled. When you’re returning to the University, you would not only work with your School of enrollment to (or your Department) to return to studies, but you would require a new I-20. You would pay the SEVIS [Student and Exchange Visitor Information System] fee again. It does not cancel the visa in your passport, but what has been canceled is the eligibility for work authorization. So you have to rebuild that eligibility, which would start when you return to the United States. So what that means for everyone is you would not be eligible for CPT.
or OPT until you have been back for at least one academic year following the Leave.

Mark Rhoads

And for students who are in their last year or just before their last year, they need to think very carefully about having their F-1 status terminated if it is your desire to stay in the United States after graduation and get a work visa, like for example the H-1B, then it is essential that you qualify for Optional Practical Training. H-1Bs cannot be effective any earlier than October 1 every year. If you graduate in the Spring, you will absolutely need Optional Practical Training in order to bridge you to October 1, when the H-1B would become effective. So if you’re in your last year, or in advance of your last year, thinking of taking a Gap Year, and terminating your F-1 status, consult with Mr. Tanson’s office, because that could have very negative implications on your ability to remain after graduation.

Dudley Doane

Susan Davis, this next question is for you:

“If my flight is on the 20th and my move-in slot is on the 20th, should I start my 14-day quarantine from the 21st, after I moved my stuff on the 20th, or should I ignore the on-Grounds move-in and not move into my on-Grounds dorm until I finished the 14-day quarantine elsewhere?”

Susan Davis

Without getting into all of the math, which we can do, again be in touch with ISO. I know Mr. Tanson said there’ll be a survey going around today, so we’ll have more of the details of your flight itinerary beyond the dates. You may be able to move-in, depending on where you’re living. So that’s the key question. So by us knowing the flight arrival was the 20th, and move-in slot is also on the 20th, we simply need to know where you would be living in Housing, and then we can advise you whether you can move-in and begin your self-quarantine in Housing, or we need to route you to a different option to complete your self-quarantine, and then you would you would continue to move-in. I guess one of the questions is: if you have a lot of belongings with you, how will you manage those? And again, we can discuss that and plan for that once we know where you would ultimately be living.
And also just to be clear, we are soliciting that information in the survey that will go out later today. So not only travel information is being requested, but we’re also asking people to tell us exactly where they’re going to be living this Fall. And that will give Student Affairs and UVA Housing the information they need to advise incoming students effectively. Next question:

“This week I found out that I will have to leave my sorority house if I test positive. Being so close to the move-in date, I have few or no other options for alternative housing in Charlottesville. How will a situation like this be handled?”

And turning to you, Susan:

By living in a sorority house, you’re living in a communal area. Those are private properties. So they do have rules that they can impose, and it sounds like in this particular situation, and it may just be because the real communal style of living in that location, that if you test positive, there’s not a comfort level that you could stay there. In those instances that you are off-Grounds, you would not be eligible to come on to Grounds for University isolation space, but we in Student Affairs would work with this particular student, if that scenario presented itself, to identify what other options there are available in the community, including very likely a hotel option. So I know it’s scary, and you really want to run through all these options and make sure you have all those plans, and that’s really important, but do know you’ll have a contact in Student Affairs that can guide you as to what your options are for where you could go.

And Susan, to be clear, sorority and fraternity housing is not University Housing, correct? It’s akin to off-Grounds housing.

That is correct.
Richard Tanson

But Dudley, let’s emphasize a point that Susan made before, and we’ll make it again, especially to all of those out there in this family who we’ve spoken to: nobody is going to be put on the street. The University is going to make sure that everybody has a safe haven. It may involve some cost, but everybody will have a safe haven and will have access to the medical facilities of the University as well.

Dudley Doane

Thanks, Richard. That’s good information to emphasize. This is a question, I think, from a graduate student who’s on Grounds now:

“What’s the availability of the COVID-19 testing kit for graduate students who are currently working in labs during the pandemic?”

Susan Davis

So again, this mail-in testing kit is going to be University-contracted with a third-party vendor to administer this process. And we’re going to be communicating on this very soon in terms of the details. The portal that will open for students to request the kit, and where it should be mailed, is going to open in early August. Our earliest information right now is August 3. So if you’re already on Grounds and you’re in a research lab, and I know we had a recent FAQ that we updated with a lot of information related to that situation, including the question that was very common: “Do I even need to complete these requirements, since I really have never left and I’m doing a daily Health Attestation and following the right protocols in research labs?” And so know that is not going to disrupt your ability to continue to be in the lab, but you will, as students, still request the test, and you will administer it, and follow those directions as well. And so, I don’t know if you want to add, Phil, but I will say there’s a new and pretty specific FAQ on this very question [See “Research” section of FAQs for Students].

Phillip Trella

The only thing that I would add is that the kind of sibling question to this is about self-quarantine, and what the instructions are there. I would say that the instructions are really to follow the instructions that have been provided for students who are not able to self-quarantine. So there are a set of
guidelines. I don’t have them in front of me, but included in that are things like: not attending large events, trying to stay as far out of crowds as you can, really maintaining social distancing for the 14-day period preceding the start of the semester. So again, we know that you’ve been here, working in labs, but there is still a testing requirement that you will have to engage in. And then there’s also the instructions that you would need to follow for students who are not able to self-quarantine, and those FAQs are up on the website [See “Prior to Returning to Grounds” section of FAQs for Students].

I’m also getting some questions from graduate students in terms of the delivery of the Personal Protective Equipment. How that’s going to be delivered to students? Will graduate students who are already here receive that material? And the answer is “yes.” I can’t say for certain precisely what the plans are. My understanding is that those are going to be distributed through the Schools. So I would presume, you’d get some information from your school on how and when precisely that would be distributed. But the PPE is there; there is a testing requirement; and there are guidelines for what you should be doing in terms of the 14-day run-up to the start of the Fall semester, which is August 25. I know that if you’ve been here for the whole time, you might be questioning, what exactly I need to do, but I think those are the three things that I would look for.

Susan Davis

It’s my understanding that a lot will be administered through the Schools. And if you’re living in University Housing, it will be delivered through those channels.

Dudley Doane

We’re going to try to fit in two more questions. The first, Richard, I think is for you:

“In case we’re not able to start on Grounds, and we start the semester online, what will happen to CPT/OPT eligibility in the following cases: reaching Grounds after the first semester, getting to Grounds after the first year?”

Richard Tanson

Again, your status doesn’t begin until you establish F-1 status, which doesn’t occur until you enter the United States and are admitted as F-1. So, in so far
as for almost all the Schools of enrollment at the University, you have to be in status for one academic year in order to qualify, then that would interrupt and prevent eligibility for CPT or OPT. So there’s one school where there’s an exception to that, and that’s the Darden School of Business.

Dudley Doane

Last question this morning:

“If my partner under an F-2 [nonimmigrant dependent] visa decides to join me later in the year, can she do that? Should the I-20 date be the same as mine, which is an August date?”

Richard Tanson

That’s always true. Nothing changes and an F-2 Dependent can always join later in the year. Remember that this is a derivative status, so the dates on the I-20 are guided by the Principal, meaning the F-1 student, but a Dependent can always join after the Principal.

Dudley Doane

Thank you very much. Our hour is up. I thank all our audience members around the world for joining us this morning. Thanks to our panelists. A reminder that international students—new and continuing—can expect to receive a survey from the ISO this afternoon, and as has been stated many times throughout this presentation this morning, we’re ready in the ISO, Student Affairs, your School of admission to continue fielding your questions, working with you during these next few weeks, as we approach the beginning of the Fall 2020 semester. So have a great weekend, and thanks again for joining us.
Thank you for joining us for the Town Hall. For any inquiries, write to:

issp@virginia.edu