

May 5, 2021

Michael Drake
c/o Chris.Harrington@ucdc.edu

Dear Mr. Drake:

Thank you for your April 7 email and letter to Secretary Blinken. You wrote urging the Department of State to take positive actions that will allow a greater number of international students to return to U.S. campuses in the Fall 2021 semester.

International students are a priority for the Department of State. We recognize the important contributions these students make to our college and university campuses, the positive impact they have on U.S. communities, and the rich benefits of academic cooperation in increasing cultural understanding, furthering research, and knowledge, and supporting United States diplomacy. We are committed to supporting the U.S. academic community and the U.S. economy, while administering U.S. law. We recognize this is a critical period in the calendar for students seeking admission to U.S. universities.

To that end, Secretary Blinken determined that travel by bona fide students pursuant to F, J, and M visas is in the national interest for purposes of exceptions to geographic COVID proclamations affecting travelers who have been present in India, China, Iran, South Africa, or Brazil. Entry of travelers who have been present in these areas and who plan to engage in a full-time program of study that commences on or after August 1, 2021 will no longer be suspended by Presidential Proclamations 9984, 9992, 10143, and the proclamation of April 30. Embassies and consulates worldwide have begun to schedule appointments accordingly while prioritizing the safety and health of our staff and consular clients. Previous exceptions for students who have been present in the Schengen Area, the UK, and Ireland remain unchanged.

Consular operations at our embassies and consulates vary based on local health conditions. We ask that students and exchange visitors regularly check U.S. embassy and U.S. consulate websites for current operating status and visa appointment scheduling information. During the pandemic, the Department is reviewing all possible options to issue visas to legally qualified applicants, including F, M, and J visa applicants; the in-person visa interview is a statutory requirement and will be required for first-time applicants. Individuals renewing visas in the same classification, including students returning to the same program of study, may be eligible for interview waivers, which have been expanded through the end of 2021 to provide additional flexibility during the Covid-19 pandemic. For more information, please visit our website at travel.state.gov.

We hope this information is helpful.

Sincerely,

Visa Services
<http://www.travel.state.gov/>

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Any information in this transmission pertaining to the issuance or refusal of visas or permits to enter the United States shall be considered confidential under section 222(f) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) [8 U.S.C. 1202]. Access to and use of such information must be solely for the formulation, amendment, administration, or enforcement of the immigration, nationality, and other laws of the United States under 222(f) and as specified in FAM guidance. If you have received such information in error, do not review, retransmit, disclose disseminate, use or take any action in reliance upon this information, and contact the sender as soon as possible.