



**United States Department of State**

*Washington, D.C. 20520*

April 22, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

I am writing to thank you for your commitment to hosting international students on your campus, and to assure you that the U.S. Department of State will continue to support academic mobility through the Fulbright Program and other exchanges as conditions allow, and to promote U.S. higher education to international students through our EducationUSA advising centers around the world.

The current global pandemic resulted in unprecedented circumstances for the State Department's exchange programs, as I know it did for exchanges conducted by U.S. universities and other organizations. In March, following the issuance of a Level Four Global Travel Advisory, the State Department directed current American participants in our exchanges to return home, and has paused initiating new exchanges. The majority of our international academic exchange participants have remained in the U.S. to complete their academic year 2019-20 programs, primarily through online study. In the meantime, we have continued to process applications for the Fulbright Program for both U.S. and international participants, and are currently receiving offers of admission from U.S. institutions for foreign Fulbright students for the 2020-21 academic year. We will continue to closely monitor conditions overseas and in the U.S., the State Department's travel advisories, and the guidance of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as well as U.S. and foreign campuses' plans and projections for the coming academic year, as we continue to evaluate what is feasible and possible for State Department-funded exchanges in 2020-21.

While we do not have a timeline for the resumption of visa services, we will keep you informed of future developments.

I want to recognize and thank our many partners in the U.S. higher education community for your resourceful, flexible and compassionate response to these unique global circumstances, including your support for our Fulbright, Humphrey, Global Ugrad and Community College Initiative participants from abroad. While closing your campuses to limit the further spread of COVID-19, you went to exceptional lengths to ensure that students with the greatest needs, including international students, received help in finding alternative housing and resources. Administrators and faculty pivoted rapidly to provide services and courses on-line, to ensure that teaching and learning continued without interruption. Your response exemplified the innovation, dedication and student-centered approaches that we cite when promoting U.S. higher education to international audiences.

The State Department's EducationUSA network of over 400 educational advising centers in 180 countries continues to operate globally, having shifted our presence on-line through virtual one-on-

one and group advising sessions, webinars, virtual college fairs, and an enhanced on-line and social media presence. Whether the fall semester on U.S. campuses is largely conducted online, or whether students are able to return to classrooms, labs and dormitories at that time, EducationUSA will continue to encourage international students to choose U.S. institutions. We know that while a real life experience in a U.S. classroom is ideal, U.S. higher education's academic quality, rigor and values, including critical thinking and academic freedom, will be fully maintained through its virtual offerings as well.

As you know, the United States hosts over one million international students at our higher education institutions, where they live and learn alongside their American peers and contribute intellectually and culturally to our campuses and our communities. They gain an understanding and appreciation for the American people and American values that will remain with them throughout their lives. International students also support the U.S. economy, contributing \$45 billion and supporting more than 458,000 jobs in 2018 alone. We have also seen tremendous and gratifying growth in the numbers of American students studying abroad in the past decade, and we will continue to advocate for and support study abroad by Americans. Today's international exchange students are tomorrow's global leaders, building bridges today that will result in enhanced business and trade, science and innovation, arts and culture, as well as diplomacy for the United States and our relationships around the world.

As we all work to emerge from the current crisis, we are confident that an American education will continue to be valued by students and their families around the world. We are committed to maintaining and growing the United States as the top study destination for international students so we may continue to build the relationships that will ensure our national security and economic prosperity into the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Caroline Casagrande". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Caroline Casagrande  
Deputy Assistant Secretary  
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs  
U.S. Department of State