

Dear international students,

By now you have received President McCartney's plan for a "[Culture of Care](#)" this fall semester and have most likely seen the new SEVP guidance we referenced in our last communication. We recognize how utterly frustrating all of this must be for you, and we are here to help in whatever ways we can. **Most importantly, there is no immediate effect on anyone's F-1 visa status as a result of these plans.** We'll need to act quickly, but there is some time to plan for the fall semester ahead.

Below you will find some of the options that we've been able to identify for Smith international students for this semester, all that work within Smith's announced plan and within SEVP's current guidance. (***If you utilize something other than an F-1 visa to attend Smith College, some of the options below may not apply to your situation. Please follow up with the ISSO if your options are unclear.*) They are arranged by your Smith student standing, so please read the section that applies best to you. As we mentioned in our last email, SEVP's guidance is still preliminary, so we're hopeful that there will be changes to it in the weeks and months ahead. In fact, a lawsuit has already been launched jointly by [Harvard and MIT](#). If there are updates, we will certainly be in communication to explain them in detail.

First, we want to address two predominant questions we've seen about whether or not Smith's pivot to remote learning after Thanksgiving, and for the duration of J-term, would constitute "online only" learning. Since the first is part of our hybrid fall semester, it **will not change** your F-1 status for the remainder of the semester. Since Smith's January term is not required and part of our recess between required semesters, any participation is "incidental to status" and would be allowable in or out of the US by F-1 international students.

For those of you in the US and/or considering coming to campus, we are actively working on safeguards to make sure that we can protect your status, should the college need to pivot to a remote-only instruction model mid-semester. If you are traveling to the US on an F-1 visa, you *must* arrive in time for the start of classes. If you are unable to arrive by then, US regulations will not allow for you to arrive mid-way through the semester. If you're currently in the US and not part of our invited campus group, the ISSO is working on ways to either assist in your return home or ensure your ability to return to campus, whichever is most feasible.

For those of you who will want or need to stay at home, you may take courses at Smith remotely to stay on track. Since Smith is offering a hybrid model, under new guidance we will not be able to maintain your F-1 record for a fully online course of study, but we will still support you as a Smith student. You can enroll in Smith courses online from home, or we're working hard to allow for local opportunities that can help you stay on track and, in some situations, even maintain your F-1 status.

We know that a million questions are swirling in your head, and that email is a woefully inadequate tool for this type of situation. We've set up two Zoom calls to be able to answer questions in real-time. Please join us for one or both of the sessions below. We will continue to add more of these Q&A sessions as needed.

Zoom Q&As:

Thursday, July 9th, 8:00pm EDT <https://smith.zoom.us/j/97942390867>

Friday, July 10th, 12:00pm EDT <https://smith.zoom.us/j/94796596703>

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT OPTIONS FOR FALL 2020

STUDENTS NEW TO SMITH

(First-years, transfer students, new Ada Comstock Scholars, Diploma Program participants, new graduate students)

- Come to campus: If you are interested and able to arrive on campus for September 1st, you are invited to do so. You will be required to take at least some portion of your courses in-person in order to maintain F-1 status. You must work closely with the ISSO and your Class Dean to ensure that your enrollment satisfies the requirements of an F-1 visa, and may need to depart the US if there is a change to a fully online model mid-semester. (Please note: Smith ISSO will do everything in our power to ensure that you are supported in the event of this happening, including but not limited to arranging travel and/or advocating for your continued stay in the US.) The College's plan to go fully remote for the four-week period following Thanksgiving will not affect your F-1 status, since it is a planned portion of our hybrid model. At that time as an international student, you will have the choice to depart campus, or you can apply to stay on-campus to finish your coursework, if you are unable to travel home. The ISSO will be in touch later in the summer to issue you a new I-20 indicating your compliance with SEVP guidance.
- Enroll from home: You can enroll fully in your Smith courses from home (or elsewhere outside the US). Smith will support you remotely in your **fall learning** via online coursework. You will have the option to arrive in the spring semester on-campus or enroll for the full year online. Smith ISSO will issue you new I-20 paperwork in this case, with your updated "program start", since your F-1 start date will correspond with the date you enter the US to begin coursework at Smith.

In this case, your SEVIS ID will remain the same, and your SEVIS I-901 fee will still be applicable to your F-1 visa for your 2021 entry. You will likely need to complete a new DS-160 with your local US consulate and pursue your F-1 entry visa closer to your US arrival.

- Defer your admission: You can take this fall semester or academic year off, as an international student, if you are unable to come to campus due to visa/travel restrictions. If you are unable to make a visa interview at your local US Consulate, this now qualifies you to defer your admission! The ISSO will recommend your deferral, and the Admissions Office will defer your admission to Spring 2021 or Fall 2021. If you defer just one semester, you will be invited in the spring to study on-campus, alongside other international entering students who were delayed, as well as juniors and seniors. Smith ISSO will issue you new I-20 paperwork in this case, with your updated “program start”, since your F-1 start date will correspond with the date you enter the US to begin coursework at Smith. Since you will not be enrolled this fall, your “program end date” will also be adjusted to reflect the deferral.

In this case, your SEVIS ID will remain the same, and your SEVIS I-901 fee will still be applicable to your F-1 visa. You may need to complete a new DS-160 with your local US consulate and will continue with your visa process to arrive in early-to-mid-February 2021. In the case of a full year deferral, you’ll pause your visa process until next summer.

RETURNING SOPHOMORES, ADA COMSTOCK SCHOLARS

- Return to campus: If you are interested and able to come back to campus, you are invited to do so. You will be required to take at least some portion of your courses in-person in order to maintain F-1 status. You must work closely with the ISSO and your Class Dean to ensure that your enrollment satisfies the requirements of an F-1 visa, and may need to depart the US if there is a change to a fully online model mid-semester. (Please note: Smith ISSO will do everything in our power to ensure that you are supported in the event of this happening, including but not limited to arranging travel and/or advocating for your continued stay in the US.) The College’s plan to go fully remote for the four-week period following Thanksgiving will not affect your F-1 status, since it is a planned portion of our hybrid model. At that time as an international student, you will have the choice to depart campus, or you can apply to stay on-campus to finish your coursework, if you are unable to travel home. The ISSO will be in touch later in the summer to issue you a new I-20 indicating your compliance with SEVP guidance.
- Enroll from a distance: If you are unable to return to campus, or prefer not to do so, you have the option to enroll online from abroad. You cannot enroll from somewhere within the US, unless you have been approved to live off-campus and can enroll in face-to-face coursework. If you choose to engage in your coursework from outside the US, the ISSO will terminate your SEVIS record as an “authorized early withdrawal.” This will not be a punitive action, and it will not have negative connotations for your long term immigration record. You will continue to be a Smith student and make normal progress toward your degree, but you will not maintain an F-1 status during your time abroad. As a result, you

will not be eligible for US entry in F-1 status for the academic year 2020-2021 and will not be eligible for CPT or OPT this year or in summer 2021.

Next summer, ISSO will be in communication to collect new financial information to reissue your I-20 to you. At that time, you may need to apply for a new F-1 entry visa as well. There will be a required SEVIS I-901 fee (\$350) and possibly a new DS-160 fee (\$160).

- Enroll at a local university: If you would like to enroll at a local university, you may take advantage of [an exception to the Smith study abroad policies](#) made available to international residents for this year.
- Personal leave: If you would like to take personal leave for a semester or year, that can be arranged through the Class Deans Office. Please bear in mind that your SEVIS record will be terminated as described above, and the ISSO will reissue your I-20 when your leave ends. During this leave, you may be eligible to [take part-time courses locally](#). Upon return after a personal leave, any financial aid you currently receive would still be in place.

RETURNING JUNIORS

- Enroll from a distance: If you are unable to return to campus or have not been invited to do so, you have the option to enroll online from abroad. You cannot enroll from somewhere within the US, unless you have been approved to live off-campus and can enroll in face-to-face coursework. If you choose to engage in your coursework from outside the US, the ISSO will terminate your SEVIS record as an “authorized early withdrawal.” This will not be a punitive action, and it will not have negative connotations for your long term immigration record. You will continue to be a Smith student and make normal progress toward your degree, but you will not maintain an F-1 status during your time abroad. As a result, you will not be eligible for US entry in F-1 status for Fall 2020. In addition, you will restart your F-1 record when you return, so will not be eligible for CPT or OPT during Summer 2021.
- Enroll at a local university: If you would like to enroll at a local university, you could take advantage of an [exception to the Smith study abroad policies](#) made available to international residents for this year.
- Petition to come to campus: If you would like to be considered for campus housing, please complete the application sent to you in your July 7th survey.
- Personal leave: If you would like to take personal leave for a semester or year, that can be arranged through the Class Deans Office. Please bear in mind that your SEVIS

record will be terminated as described above, and the ISSO will reissue your I-20 when your leave ends. During this leave, you may be eligible to [take part-time courses locally](#). Upon return after a personal leave, any financial aid you currently receive would still be in place.

RETURNING FIRST-SEMESTER SENIORS

- **Enroll from a distance**: If you are unable to return to campus or have not been invited to do so, you have the option to enroll online from abroad. You cannot enroll from somewhere within the US, unless you have been approved to live off-campus and can enroll in face-to-face coursework. If you choose to engage in your coursework from outside the US, the ISSO will terminate your SEVIS record as an “authorized early withdrawal.” This will not be a punitive action, and it will not have negative connotations for your long term immigration record. You will continue to be a Smith student and make normal progress toward your degree, but you will not maintain an F-1 status during your time abroad. As a result, you will not be eligible for US entry in F-1 status for Fall 2020. In addition, you will restart your F-1 record when you return, so will not be eligible for OPT after graduation.
- **Enroll at a local university**: If you would like to enroll at a local university, you could take advantage of an [exception to the Smith transfer policies](#) made available to international residents for this year.
- **Petition to come to campus**: If you would like to be considered for campus housing, please complete the application in your July 7th survey.
- **Personal leave**: If you would like to take personal leave for a semester or year, that can be arranged through the Class Deans Office. Please bear in mind that your SEVIS record will be terminated as described above, and the ISSO will reissue your I-20 when your leave ends. During this leave, you may be eligible to [take part-time courses locally](#). Upon return after a personal leave, any financial aid you currently receive would still be in place. Please bear in mind that when you return, you must be in active F-1 status for at least 9 months (2 semesters) in order to qualify for OPT after graduation.

RETURNING SECOND-SEMESTER SENIORS

- **Enroll from a distance**: If you are unable to return to campus or have not been invited to do so, you have the option to enroll online from abroad. You cannot enroll from somewhere within the US, unless you have been approved to live off-campus and can enroll in face-to-face coursework. If you choose to engage in your coursework from outside the US, the ISSO will terminate your SEVIS record as “authorized early withdrawal.” This will not be a punitive action, and it will not have negative connotations

for your long term immigration record. You will continue to be a Smith student and make normal progress toward your degree, but you will not maintain an F-1 status during your time abroad. As a result, you will not be eligible for entry to the US in F-1 status and will forfeit your eligibility for OPT.

- Petition to come to campus: If you would like to be considered for campus housing, please complete the application in your July 7th survey.
- Finish away at a local university: If you would like to enroll at a local university, you could take advantage of an [exception to the Smith study abroad policies](#) made available to international residents for this year. Although this would maintain your visa status, it does not guarantee that you would be eligible for OPT after graduation. Current regulations state that a student must apply for OPT from within the US, so there is significant risk that an OPT application sent from abroad would be denied.
- Personal leave: If you would like to take personal leave for a semester or year, that can be arranged through the Class Deans Office. Please bear in mind that your SEVIS record will be terminated as described above, and the ISSO will reissue your I-20 when your leave ends. During this leave, you may be eligible to [take part-time courses locally](#). Upon return after a personal leave, any financial aid you currently receive would still be in place.

I know this is a lot of information to absorb quickly. I look forward to answering your questions on Zoom tonight and tomorrow, and as guidance continues to solidify. Please know that we'll work as quickly and diligently as possible to answer all your questions. Please also check back frequently on the [COVID-19 Q&A page](#), since we'll be continuing to update that information.

My heart is with all of you during this trying period. We will get through it together, and as always, I will support you in your goals and achievements.

Best,
Dean Caitlin and the ISSO staff