

Dear UConn Faculty, Staff, and Graduate Students:

This week, the Trump administration announced new restrictions that limit access to educational opportunities in the United States for international students. In short, international students on F-1 visas may not stay in the country to pursue their studies if their coursework is entirely online.

This is a serious challenge to our core values as a comprehensive and multi-cultural global research institution. Currently, UConn has 2,055 international undergraduate and graduate students in Connecticut who would be in jeopardy along with the 1,558 international students who are currently abroad and unable to return to campus. The majority of our normally enrolled 1,600 international graduate students serve as teaching and research assistants and provide essential services in support of our fall re-opening efforts. Without them, University teaching and research capacity will be restricted.

We are frustrated by this decision and the way it targets international students, who have already endured so many challenges related to the pandemic. This new ICE directive will cause severe disruption to the lives of our international students, a core part of the UConn family. Many of these students have stayed in Connecticut during the pandemic, have leases, spend considerable time away from their families and loved ones abroad, and at this moment, are simply unable to depart the United States given limited flights and travel restrictions. They made decisions to come to Connecticut for their education, decisions that lead to sacrificing time with loved ones in order for UConn to provide access to an exceptional education. It is our responsibility to ensure that they are treated fairly and their aspirations can be fulfilled.

Further, this creates additional complications for course planning for the fall, as we will have to be mindful of international student course availability that allows them to take at least one course in-person.

Our Global Affairs team and The Graduate School are working swiftly with other University partners to study these new restrictions and develop guidance and strategies to do all we can to allow our international students to continue their studies as smoothly as possible. We are also seeking congressional and legal assistance to have this directive reversed and be consistent with previous directives for online learning for international students during the pandemic. We will be in touch as we know more but please know now that we are distressed by these developments and we are exploring additional avenues that we may be able to use to assist affected students.

Thank you,
Carl

Carl Lejuez
Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

07/8/2020