



## COVID-19 Discussion with BA-PIER & SEVP

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 1:00-2:00 PM

### Zoom Meeting Details:

Join from PC, Mac, Linux, iOS or Android: <https://cccconfer.zoom.us/j/781010684>

Or iPhone one-tap (US Toll): +16699006833,781010684# or +13462487799,781010684#

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Meeting ID: 781 010 684

International numbers available: <https://cccconfer.zoom.us/j/781010684>

Or Skype for Business (Lync):

SIP: [781010684@lync.zoom.us](https://cccconfer.zoom.us/j/781010684)

### Agenda

- I. **SEVP Q&A Session**, Tiffany Coyne, SEVP Field Representative Territory 5 (20 mins)
- II. **Roundtable Discussion** (40 mins)

### Pre-Submitted SEVP Questions:

- Are reduced course loads allowed in situations that students find themselves struggling with moving to an all online format?
- Any guidance on those on OPT? For example, will they be subjected to the 90 days to look for a job? (I realize that this is USCIS territory as opposed to SEVP...)
- Can DS-2019's be sent electronically?
- Sending I-20s electronically to initial students
- On campus work from overseas
- Is there any leeway for students needing 12 units if any of their classes are cancelled mid semester? Not all classes are canceling, just a few select ones that rely on in-person instruction, i.e. a catering class that meets during catering events. If we can authorize an RCL, what would the reason be?
- Questions on OPT in times of COVID-19

- Can we enroll new initial status students in summer or fall if our classes are still remote?
- How long will students be able to use electronic copies of the form I-20 to get a visa or enter the US. Can we expect these to be valid in August when students arrive for fall?
- If we can't go back to in-person teaching for fall 2020, what is SEVP's response to this scenario?
- If visa is approved for fall 2020 begin term but student defers to spring 2021 due to COVID19 related reasons, does the student need to go back for another visa interview?
- Will RCLs be considered for students struggling with transition from in-class to online modality due to COVID-19?
- Will any regulations be updated to assist OPT students who've lost jobs due to COVID-19? (90 unemployment days etc.)
- Can a Reduced Course Load be authorized for students who are struggling with online learning? What if they previously had an Initial RCL?
- Has there been any discussion about extending the 15 day grace period for an out of status student to leave the U.S. who is having trouble returning to his or her home country due to COVID-19?

#### **Pre-Submitted Discussion Topics:**

- Institutional Policies and how to establish best practices for new programs
- How are you issuing your I20s at this time?
- What are you hearing from in the field for INTL Enrollment Management? Concerns from students?
- How is your university pivoting for INTL Enrollment Management?
- Process with Coronavirus (ie. admissions, OPT, support for OPT looking for jobs, etc)
- Any consideration to extend OPT for students impacted by the COVID-19 crisis? It may be difficult for students to obtain in person interviews or jobs because of social distancing - what is SEVP stance on OPT extension for current students holding EAD's?
- Any thoughts on the ability for accepted students for Fall 2020 to be able to receive a visa to enter the US? I see that Beijing is closed to student visas till November 2020-will this be the case for other countries?
- Are schools allowing any reduced course loads for those students who are struggling with an all online course format? (not just RCLs based on classes that were cancelled due to COVID19 or first semester students with academic difficulties)
- An active student went for vacation while on a semester break to India and now is not able to come back due to lockdown in his country. Do we register him in sevis with less than course load. Since we are doing online classes do we allow him to register and take classes while still in India.
- OPT student mentioned his company is laying off/furlough for some time then rehire them when the situation improves. If they are not paid do we need to report as unemployment.
- A student on H1b shared information that his company laid him off so now do not have a job, In case he does not find a job will he need to study once again and change status to F1

- Has anyone heard of any guidance provided by USCIS regarding OPT, specifically, students impacted with delays in obtaining licenses needed to work. Any word on USCIS adjusting employment dates on EAD cards?
- Can I get connected to a BA-Pier member who does ISSS and Admission for International students?
- Online class definition clarity
- Virtual programming
- Virtual outreach
- What to do if fall is virtualized? Same as spring...? Would new students be able to enter the U.S. or should they do fall online?
- Discussion of OPT applications for folks who returned home for the spring...
- How are institutions handling digital signature on i-20 given not all agencies have officially accepted digital signature
- Students in a Grace Period that must begin new program soon
- Online best practices for recruitment
- New Fall 2020 admitted international students - Will you permit new students to begin their degree programs online from their home country if your university permits it? How will you handle the I-20 program start date?
- Have you seen an increase in program extension requests and how are you handling these requests mostly related to PhD students who don't have the same access to labs and equipment?
- Recruitment/Yielding tools currently used?
- Institutional policies-How are institutions handling refunds/tuition related to COVID-19?
- Students terminated for below 12 units - travel and reentry difficult due to COVID-19
- Students terminated for below 12 units - reinstatement
- Best practices for advising students on obtaining an SSN while the offices are closed - any success stories from mailing in?

**Other Business:** Gauge interest in NAFSA/BA-PIER virtual webinar collaboration in May focusing on online orientation.

### **USCIS Announces Flexibility in Submitting Required Signatures During COVID-19 National Emergency (fwd from Tiffany Coyne)**

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services today announced that, due to the ongoing COVID-19 National Emergency announced by President Trump on March 13, 2020, **we will accept all benefit forms and documents with reproduced original signatures**, including the Form I-129, Petition for Nonimmigrant Worker, for submissions dated March 21, 2020, and beyond.

USCIS already accepts various petitions, applications and other documents bearing an electronically reproduced original signature. **This means that a document may be scanned, faxed, photocopied, or similarly reproduced provided that the copy must be of an original**

document containing an original handwritten signature, unless otherwise specified.[1] For forms that require an original “wet” signature, per form instructions, USCIS will accept electronically reproduced original signatures for the duration of the National Emergency. This temporary change only applies to signatures. All other form instructions should be followed when completing a form.

Individuals or entities that submit documents bearing an electronically reproduced original signature must also retain copies of the original documents containing the “wet” signature. USCIS may, at any time, request the original documents, which if not produced, could negatively impact the adjudication of the immigration benefit.

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[1] See Volume 1, General Policies and Procedures, Part B, Submission of Benefit Requests, Chapter 2, Signatures [1 USCIS-PM B.2].

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