

International Students to Remain in Home Country

July 30, 2020

Dear Students,

Normally at this time, we would be getting ready to welcome you to campus in August. Instead, today we are writing with news that is more difficult to share. In light of the health and safety concerns around the COVID-19 pandemic, Lehigh is advising that incoming international students remain in their home countries for the fall semester.

This guidance applies to most newly admitted international undergraduate and graduate students. International undergraduate and graduate students who are already in the United States are excepted from this guidance. New international PhD students who are able to obtain a visa may also petition their department for an exception.

While recent U.S. Department of Homeland Security guidance has confirmed that international students can take a hybrid course load (with some classes online and some in person), Lehigh is making this decision independently in light of the very particular circumstances that affect international students. Throughout our planning, we emphasized that our ultimate goal was to provide an outstanding educational experience while prioritizing the health and safety of our community and neighbors in Bethlehem. The rates of COVID-19 infection continue to rise in the US, however, and access to testing has become more limited as resources are diverted to hotspots. International travel to the U.S. remains very restricted, and international travelers will need to quarantine for 14 days when arriving in country.

This decision does not affect your ability to begin your Lehigh studies in the fall. Most graduate programs have already moved their courses remote in order to accommodate international students who weren't likely to get here due to visa issues. Faculty have been working this summer to enhance virtual instruction. And as a Lehigh student, you will still have access to all the resources that will support your success in this first semester and beyond. We are fully committed to offering a quality Lehigh experience, regardless of how students are learning.

Our goal is for international students to return to campus for the spring semester. Over the coming months, we will continue to monitor conditions and remain in communication. If you already have your visa or you have secured a visa appointment, please continue with that process.

This is not at all how we would like to be welcoming you to Lehigh. But right now, we need to put your health and safety first. We encourage you to remain in communication with the faculty in your program regarding your options. And please continue to contact us at intl@lehigh.edu.

Sincerely,
Cheryl Matherly, Vice President and Vice Provost for International Affairs
Samba Dieng, Director, Office of International Students and Scholars