To: U.S. Embassy or Consulate, U.S. Department of State OR
U.S. Port of Entry, Customs and Border Protection

Dear Officer,

This letter confirms the operational plan for the University of Connecticut for the fall 2020 semester, and asks your consideration to allow our student or exchange visitor, who holds a valid I-20/DS-2019, to obtain a visa and enter the U.S. as an F-1 student or a J-1 exchange visitor at UConn. The University of Connecticut will operate on a hybrid model, offering some courses fully in-person, some courses on a hybrid-blended basis, and some courses fully online, to minimize potential risk for student, faculty and staff exposure to COVID-19 while allowing some benefits of in-person education.

International students who are traveling to the U.S. require presence at UConn to fulfill their in-person course obligations. In addition, some students may have responsibilities that require physical presence outside of coursework, that are critical to the University’s mission and operations. This includes international students who hold research assistantships, teaching assistantships, and student athletes. Even if their classes are fully online, a student who holds a Graduate Assistantship, Internship or Fellowship, or a Student Athlete, will be required on campus to meet responsibilities integral to their programs. And finally, Student and Exchange Visitor program has made clear that a continuing students who initially departed the U.S. due to COVID-19 may return to pursue fully online coursework.

Please note the following recent developments:

- July 24: ICE Broadcast message states: Students actively enrolled at a U.S. school on March 9, 2020, who subsequently took courses online while outside of the country can re-enter the United States, even if their school is engaged solely in distance learning.

- July 22: The U.S. Department of State announced that F-1 students with valid visas who are traveling from Schengen Area countries, the United Kingdom and Ireland are not required to contact the U.S. Embassy to obtain an individual National Interest Exception. They automatically qualify for this exception and may travel to the U.S. Students traveling from the Schengen Area, the UK, and Ireland with valid F-1 and M-1 visas do not need to contact an embassy or consulate to seek an individual national interest exception to travel. Students seeking to apply for new F-1 or M-1 visas should check the status of visa services at the nearest embassy or consulate; those applicants who are found to be otherwise qualified for an F-1 or M-1 visa will automatically be considered for a national interest exception to travel. [https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/News/visas-news/national-interest-exceptions-from-certain-travelers-from-the-schengen-area-uk-and-ireland.html](https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/News/visas-news/national-interest-exceptions-from-certain-travelers-from-the-schengen-area-uk-and-ireland.html)
• DHS/SEVP has rescinded their guidance from July 6 that prohibits students from enrolling in an entirely online course load while in the United States. Because they rescinded this directive, **schools are not required to issue updated I-20 forms with comments about fall semester.** Furthermore, current SEVP policy allows schools to issue Form I-20s with electronic signatures, including travel signatures, which carry the same validity as a wet signature.

• The **Proclamation Suspending Entry of Aliens Who Present a Risk to the U.S. Labor Market Following the Coronavirus Outbreak**, which prevents the issuance of new visas to certain J-1 exchange visitors through December 31, 2020, only covers the following J-1 visa categories: intern, trainee, teacher, camp counselor, au pair, or summer work travel program, and their dependents. The categories of UConn J-1 visas sponsored by UConn (Student categories and Research Scholar, Professor, Short Term Scholar, Specialist categories) are NOT restricted under the June 22 Presidential Proclamation.

Upon arrival to UConn, all students and staff will be required to follow the University of Connecticut’s health and safety protocols, which will include testing for COVID-19, symptom monitoring, and contact tracing. The State of Connecticut follows the CDC 14-day quarantine guidelines for international travelers, as well as a strict 14-day quarantine requirement for travelers from certain high-risk U.S. states. All students will follow these public health guidelines set forth by the state and the University.

Thank you for any help you can provide to our student or exchange visitor who is seeking a visa, or entry to the United States. We truly appreciate your assistance during this difficult time, and please contact me if you have any questions at 860-486-3855 or rae.alexander@uconn.edu.

Sincerely,

Rae Alexander

Director, International Student and Scholar Services

PDSO/RO for SEVIS