December 16, 2020

Dear SF State International Students,

Greetings from the Office of International Programs (OIP)! Congratulations again on your admission to San Francisco State University. We look forward to welcoming you to our campus community.

International Undergraduate Admissions emailed you last Monday, December 7 regarding the possible Spring 2021 Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) guidance. We have learned that the SEVP will continue Fall 2020 guidance to Spring 2021 (See Updates on Spring 2021 SEVP COVID-19 Guidance). The Spring 2021 guidance prohibits new students to enter the U.S. to pursue all classes online. Students who are currently attending schools and physically present in the U.S. may continue to pursue all classes online in the U.S.

Here is what to expect for Spring 2021:

**Enrollment for Spring 2021**

OIP has created a Spring 2021 Plans for Enrollment and F-1 Status (PDF. 345KB) scenario chart to help you decide on your Spring 2021 plans for enrollment and F-1 Status. You will find details such as how your current location, enrollment units, admission status, will impact your F-1 status (if you are currently in F-1 status). After reviewing the plan, you should have a better understanding of what your next steps should be.

**Undergraduate Students:**

Regardless where you are, you must attend one of the New Student Orientation sessions in order to register for the Spring 2021 classes. You are also required to purchase Spring 2021 insurance (if you are in the U.S.) or sign the Spring 2021 international insurance waiver (if you are outside the U.S.) by Monday, January 4, 2021 to avoid an international insurance hold to be placed on your account on January 5, 2021.

**Graduate students:**

Registration for new Graduate students started on December 12, 2020. An international health insurance hold has been placed on your Student Center. To clear this hold, you can purchase Spring 2021 insurance (if you are in the U.S.) or sign the Spring 2021 international insurance waiver (if you are outside the U.S.).

**Pursuing study in the U.S. and outside the U.S.**

**Students who are currently outside the U.S.:**

- SEVP guidance does not allow you to enter the U.S. since all Spring 2021 classes are online. However, you may start your program outside the U.S. by enrolling online classes either full-time or part-time.
• If you have obtained an F-1 visa for Spring 2021 but are not allowed to enter the U.S., your F-1 visa will be still valid for the future semester when you are ready to enter the U.S. to take in-person classes at SF State.
• If you don’t enroll in one unit or more in Spring 2021, you will be required to reapply to the university in a timely manner.

Students who are currently attending schools/physically in the U.S.:

• If you are currently inside the United States attending a school in F-1 status and have been admitted to SF State for Spring 2021, you can remain in the United States. If you have a plan to travel outside the U.S. during the winter break, you will not be allowed to return to the U.S. for Spring 2021.
• Students requiring a transfer I-20 to SF State, be sure to follow the steps required to get your transfer I-20.

Refunds for international student health insurance

If you are outside the U.S. and have purchased insurance, you may request a refund. See Spring 2021 Plans for Enrollment and F-1 Status (PDF. 345KB) for more information or email f1@sfsu.edu.

Thing you must know about taking online classes in Spring 2021

Based on the feedback we received from other international students, we put together a list of important things that will help you: Class type, Time difference, and Technology.

1. Class type:

Online classes present unique challenges (and opportunities) for you. Regardless you are inside or outside the U.S, please familiarize with the following online course categories:

• Online Synchronous (real-time) Classes:
  o You must be present in whatever online format (ie. Zoom) the instructor requires at that time.
• Online Asynchronous (on-demand) Classes:
  o You will complete the coursework at any time of the day on your own with recorded lectures.
• Online Bichronous (blend of on-demand and real-time) Classes
  o Bichronous classes blend primarily asynchronous learning with a small number of required online or in-person real-time sessions (for example, course orientation and exams), or blend asynchronous and synchronous types of learning throughout the semester

There is no limitation for international students to choose asynchronous, synchronous and bichronous courses, all classes are counted as fully online courses.

2. Time differences:
  o Class Participation:
Participating in synchronous classes may present challenges for students residing in different time zones. For example, a synchronous class that meets at 1:00 PM in San Francisco would mean a 1:00 AM lecture for a student in Mumbai, India. For this reason, affected students should consider meeting times carefully before enrolling in synchronous or asynchronous classes. In order to determine time zone differences, you may find it helpful to use a time converter tool, such as the one available here.

- Assignment deadlines:
  - Familiarize yourself with the time zone differences, so you do not miss deadlines. For example, if a professor posts a deadline of 3PM on Thursday. That is implied that it is a California (Pacific) Time.

- University Support Services:
  - SF State services are going virtual! Many campus services are offering service virtually throughout the entire Spring 2021 semester, with some limitations. Check each department’s websites for specifics.
  - Please keep time differences in mind when accessing advisors services. Communicate your needs and ask for help, so departments are aware of your situation and how to assist you!
    - For example, F-1 advising hours are Mon-Fri 2PM to 4PM and Tue-Thurs 9:30AM to 10:30AM Pacific Time. If these hours are 4am your time, email us to schedule a zoom meeting for a more reasonable time between 8AM to 5PM Pacific Time.
    - We are in an unprecedented time, and we understand you may be dealing with urgent matters; however, please be patient while SF State adapts to and improves our virtual support services. We are in this together!

3. Technology:
- Do you have reliable internet access? A working desktop/laptop, camera, microphone? Using unreliable equipment could cause a lot of frustration and waste your time. Consider investing in high-speed internet connection and a pair of good headphones (if you share your living space with other people) to listen to lectures and discussions to ensure your success in taking online classes.

Contact us

We hope this information is helpful and you know that we are here to support you! Please contact your international student advisors at f1@sfsu.edu if you have additional questions or concerns regarding the information above.

Sincerely,

The Office of International Programs