



Student Council Statement in Solidarity of International Students

Date: July 24, 2020

On July 6, 2020, Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) issued a declaration stating that students who find themselves attending an entirely online mode of learning must leave the country or find alternative steps to maintain their nonimmigrant status.¹ Given the current circumstances pertaining to COVID-19 a lawsuit was filed by Harvard University and MIT which was supported by many other universities and student organizations including the University Student Senate (USS) at CUNY.² Fortunately, the federal government has agreed to rescind the policy and any implementation of the same.

Current regulations according to the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) for the Fall 2020 semester follow the exemptions as provided to International Students during the Spring 2020 semester.

This exemption would allow International Students to continue living in the U.S. while classes are being held online without losing their Visa status. Moreover, International Students who choose to live out of the U.S. may continue to take their classes online while still maintaining their Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) status. This decision is monumental in that it recognizes the value that International Students bring to the campuses, communities, and the country.

International Students are an integral part of the student body at John Jay and contribute a diverse cultural experience to our community. They account for around 200 undergraduate and graduate scholars who pay millions of dollars in Out of State tuition. Also, International Students contribute heavily to the graduation retention rate.

International Students face many difficulties coming to the U.S. to study especially amid a global pandemic, so ensuring that they do not have more adversities is paramount. These students are facing a range of difficulties such as applying for a Social Security Number, getting access to personal loans and scholarships, or receiving credit cards due to their status in the United States. Most International Students pay for their education through funds coming in from other countries as they are not eligible for Federal or Pell grants and many scholarships are restricted to the U.S. citizens only. It has become difficult for students to pay for their accommodations and fees at John Jay College. Students have expressed that they have a 'Hold' on their CUNYFirst accounts due to the inability to clear their Spring 2020 fees and are unable to register for classes for the Fall 2020 semester. With the current global pandemic, a good portion of countries are currently under lockdown and are experiencing a breakdown of governmental and financial systems. This causes an adverse effect on International Students and threatens their ability to survive.

John Jay College has as of recently been more supportive of students in need and is always working towards facilitating students with all the necessary requirements to ensure student success. We believe that now is the time for John Jay College to help the International Student community by taking on some helpful initiatives.

¹ <https://www.ice.gov/news/releases/sevp-modifies-temporary-exemptions-nonimmigrant-students-taking-online-courses-during>

² <https://bit.ly/2BjxcIG>

After consultation with various International Students and becoming more familiar with their situations, we have come up with a list of items that will help this student community during these trying times to succeed and do well in their academic journey here at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

- Allow International Students to register for classes even if they have a hold on their accounts. Students have already proved their ability to pay for school and the cost of living to be eligible for student Visa (F1 or J1). In this pandemic situation, their inability to pay the fees should not be held against them as it is due to no fault of their own.
- Provide International Students with access to additional emergency funding greater than the stipulated \$1500 or fundraise to help International Students pay for emergency requirements such as rent, medical expenditure, or a stipend to help survive until they are able to receive funds from their home country. International Students do not necessarily have family living in the U.S. and many have been unable to go back to their home countries due to the current COVID-19 situation. As such, they are bound to spend a lot more on accommodations and expenses during the summer months. If we can come up with a funding allowance for them, that would be very helpful in aiding their journey towardshigher education.
- Given the current circumstances, for Fall 2020, allowing all students at John Jay to pay In-State tuition fees would be a step forward in making John Jay College equitable to everyone. International Students and out of state students are required to pay fees that are almost double that of in-state students. Considering the current situation with classes being held online and no in-person classes being held, students should be allowed to pay the same as their in-state counterparts. Recently USS Vice-Chair for International Affairs Nicole Agu has submitted resolutions to CUNY BoT members regarding this matter.³
- Since International Students are limited to on-campus jobs, make hiring for on-campus jobs centralized and transparent so that students know when jobs are availableonce CUNY lifts the current hiring freeze.

We will host a Town Hall for International Students with International Students as panelists on August 4th from 10 AM – 12 PM (Eastern Time). We have heard your concerns and want to hear more so we can adequately represent and advocate for your needs.

As the elected Student Council, we will fight to ensure that all International Students in the John Jay community whether here in the United States or abroad will receive the support and services they deserve and be a part of the bloodhound culture. We urge all students of John Jay College to stand by our International Student community and support them during these trying times.

Signed by

Avijit Roy, International Class Representative, Alternate USS Delegate& Chair of International Students Committee, John Jay College Student Council

Sharon Solomon, Graduate Class Representative, John Jay College Student Council

In Solidarity: John Jay College Student Council

³<https://bit.ly/32WpEhs>