October 5, 2020

Dear Officer,

Please allow us to address a few COVID-19 related concerns for admitted UMBC students.

**Spring 2021 Course Delivery Method**

UMBC is operating with a combination of online, hybrid and face-to-face modes of instruction as defined by the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) Broadcast Message: “Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) and Potential Procedural Adaptations for F and M nonimmigrant students” issued on March 9, 2020, and SEVP’s subsequent “Clarifying Questions for Fall 2020 Based On March 9 Spring Guidance Broadcast “on July 24, 2020. The U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Consular Affairs clarified in their July 24, 2020 update and FAQ entitled “SEVP Online Course Guidance for F and M Students for Fall 2020” that students who satisfy SEVP requirements may be eligible for a visa.

UMBC is committed to ensuring that all new international students meet these requirements and participate in non-online course options. Thus, admitted UMBC students are eligible to apply for a student visa and should be granted admission to the United States as an F-1 student. Thank you for assisting the student in this process.

**Electronically Issued I-20**

Please accept the electronically signed I-20 carried by this student. This I-20 has been issued in accordance with the SEVP COVID-19 guidance, which also assures cooperation from DOS and CBP.

The SEVP’s COVID-19 FAQ can be found here: [https://www.ice.gov/doclib/coronavirus/covid19faq.pdf](https://www.ice.gov/doclib/coronavirus/covid19faq.pdf)

From the May 12 2020 update, the following language is relevant to this situation:

**Electronic Form I-20 Issuance (page 6):**

1. Can DSOs electronically send signed Forms I-20 to students instead of physically mailing the forms?
A. Yes, due to COVID-19, DSOs may electronically send Forms I-20 to student email addresses listed in SEVIS.

2. What methods can DSOs use to sign and send Forms I-20?

A. SEVP has identified the following methods to sign and send the Form I-20:
   - Email a scanned version of the physically signed Form I-20;
   - Email a digitally signed Form I-20 using electronic signature software; or
   - Email a digitally signed Form I-20 that contains a digitally reproduced copy of a physical signature.

5. Has SEVP worked with both the U.S. Department of State and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) in developing the policy to accept the use of electronic signatures during the COVID-19 emergency?

A. **SEVP coordinated with both the Department of State and CBP regarding the policy to allow electronic issuance and signing of Forms I-20 for the duration of the COVID-19 emergency. Both agencies are in support of this action.** SEVP continues to respond to any issues raised or questions from both agencies about this policy and will provide clarity as needed.

Thank you in advance for honoring this guidance and accepting this student’s electronically issued and signed I-20. We appreciate your understanding in this unusual time.

Best regards,

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