

From: "President Christina H. Paxson" <president@brown.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, July 8, 2020 3:33 PM
To: "community.announce.allbrown@lists.brown.edu"
<community.announce.allbrown@lists.brown.edu>
Subject: Supporting Brown's International Students



BROWN

Dear Brown Community Members,

Amid the ongoing global pandemic, new guidance for the Student and Exchange Visitor Program issued on July 6 by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security will prohibit international students from returning to or remaining in the United States if the colleges they attend adopt online-only instruction for Fall 2020, or if students choose online-only instruction.

This new temporary rule is nothing short of cruel. It comes at a time when every student, regardless of their country of origin, should benefit from the maximum level of flexibility to pursue their studies in a manner that they or their institutions decide has the highest capacity to support their health and safety. The rule creates stark disadvantages for international students by placing the fate of their studies in the hands of an institution's ability to plan for a virus that is wholly unpredictable.

The rule is also a direct threat to public health. It will exert pressure on institutions to offer in-person classes, even if they have concluded that online instruction is best for the health of their communities. In this time of great uncertainty, every college and university should be free to make the choice of how to most safely provide education based on their own specific circumstances and the health guidelines in their states.

For these reasons, I strongly support the actions taken today by Harvard and MIT seeking a temporary restraining order with a U.S. District Court to block the implementation of this new rule.

Because Brown is planning a hybrid semester, with a blend of in-person and online courses, international students will be able to register for at least one in-person class, making it possible for them to remain in the country. However, this would not be the case if, in the event of a major resurgence of the virus in New England, Brown had to shift to fully online instruction. In the coming weeks, assuming that the DHS rule remains in effect, we will work with faculty to develop plans to minimize the chance that any of our international students—undergraduate, graduate or medical—are forced to leave the country.

In terms of immediate steps for our students, Brown is monitoring and analyzing SEVP guidance and clarifications to ensure that all returning international students will be enrolled in the required level of in-person instruction as required by SEVP. The University's Global Brown team has communicated directly with our international students and will support their decision-making in the context of the hybrid model of mixed in-person and online courses I [announced Tuesday](#) as part of Brown's instructional approach for the 2020-21 year.

We continue to support our international students, who are valued and wonderful members of our community, and we are working with our peers to identify ways to oppose the DHS policy.

Sincerely,

Christina H. Paxson
President