

July 13, 2020

Email sent from ISSS (iss@middlebury.edu)

Subject: ISSS Update about recent ICE-SEVP guidance

Dear Middlebury International Students,

This is a long email, and we ask that you read it in its entirety. This update to our July 7 email provides information about the July 6 ICE-SEVP guidance and our expected timeline for sharing more information.

The U.S. government's [July 6 ICE-SEVP fall 2020 guidance](#) continues to create confusion and apprehension for so many of you, as well as for us. As professionals who are attentive to details and value clarity, the International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) team understands that sitting with uncertainty can be an uncomfortable place to be. We have been actively engaged in advocating across our institution and with external agencies and organizations to address the situation. With each passing day this past week, the uncertainty around the published guidance increased.

Today I provide a status update, and share the actions Middlebury is taking to address the situation.

Unlike the July 6 version, SEVP's March 2020 guidance for spring semester provided reassurance that during the worldwide emergency, international students could maintain F-1 (and J-1) status while pursuing temporary remote (online) instruction as long as they enrolled full-time and made academic progress in their degree programs. Most U.S. colleges and universities expected and hoped that the updated fall 2020 SEVP guidance would be similar. Unfortunately, that was not the case.

Middlebury's ISSS team strives to provide accurate and timely advice. With the lack of clarity on the SEVP guidance and FAQ, we are holding off on providing details until we know more. We are continuously monitoring the situation and will keep you informed.

Today I write to convey these very important points:

1. *The July 6 SEVP announcement is subject to change.* We expect that additional guidance or amendments will be forthcoming in the days and weeks ahead. Higher education and congressional advocacy and/or litigation are already underway. Middlebury is participating in an *amicus* (a friend of the Court) brief in support of the Harvard/MIT case to echo the many clear points made about the devastating effects this ruling could have on our international student community. Harvard and MIT make a compelling case for suspending the July 6 guidance. We expect a preliminary decision on that case by this Wednesday, July 15. ISSS will not be updating SEVIS records (per the SEVP expectation that all records for students coming to the U.S. will be annotated by August 4) until we know more.
2. *Please do not make any sudden decisions about your program of study based on the SEVP guidance.* Also, please do not change or otherwise disrupt your continued progress in your program of study without consulting with ISSS first. *Do not make plans to depart the U.S. due to the SEVP broadcast, and do not change your plan to study remotely from abroad until we receive further clarification.* Check with us at ISSS if you need to travel and have questions.
3. We know that the U.S. government's anti-immigration actions may make you feel unwelcome and concerned for your future. Middlebury and ISSS continue our commitment to make our campuses safe places for you to continue your education. Our support of your well-being is ongoing and resolute.

4. *We encourage you to avoid the overwhelming amount of online information and conversation about the SEVP announcement.* Not all information you will find is necessary factual or relevant to Middlebury or your particular situation. Please continue to rely on [our ISSS website](#) and communication from our office for the most pertinent information that directly relates to Middlebury. ISSS will update our website with new FAQs as information is confirmed or clarified.

Although there is a lack of clarity surrounding much of the SEVP broadcast and July 7 FAQ, there is no *immediate* effect on your F-1 immigration status. There is still time for ISSS to advise you properly about fall semester plans, as more SEVP guidance and amendments develop.

It is important that you know how much we value your presence and contributions to Middlebury. My individual interactions with international students this past week reminded me of the reasons I entered this field so many years ago. You are incredibly talented individuals from around the world who have worked extremely hard to arrive at the place where you are. You are ambitious in the very best ways, curious, and resilient. You demonstrate care for others and aspire to apply yourselves, often so successfully, in service to the greater good. In my more than twenty years at Middlebury, the institution has consistently demonstrated its commitment to international students and scholars and it continues to do so. I continue to be proud of our institution's ongoing efforts to make all Middlebury programs vibrant places for our U.S. and international students.

ISSS is here for you always—especially in these challenging and uncertain times. ISSS will provide more information as we know it. We continue to ask for your patience while we tend to details associated with this announcement, and try to answer individual questions, too. We will be available for Zoom meet-up sessions later this week, and will announce them soon. For now, we ask that you take care of yourselves as best you can, sit with the uncertainty (which we know is challenging!), and await word from us on the implications of this recent SEVP notification.

In strong support of you,

~Kathy and the ISSS Team

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