Spring 2021 Pre-arrival Webinar Series:
COVID-19: Campus Security and University Resources

Andrea: Hello everyone and welcome to our last in the series of pre-arrival webinars for international students who are starting their program at the University of Iowa in January 2021 or spring semester 2021. Our today’s topic is COVID-19: Campus Safety and University Resources. Welcome!

Andrea: If you have not attended our previous webinars, please note that this is an optional webinar series and with the objective to help you as our new international students to plan for travel to and living in Iowa City, to understand orientation expectations and responsibilities, and finally to transition to student life and academics at the University of Iowa. All webinars are recorded and posted on our pre-arrival webinar website where you registered for today’s webinar.

Andrea: If you encounter any technical difficulties during the webinar, please use the chat function. However, if you have any questions related to this topic, please use the Q&A function to post your questions. We will answer them live at the end of the webinar as time permits.

Andrea: If you have not received your I-20 or DS-2019 immigration document, please note that I-20 documents can be sent electronically per permission from the government. However, if you are an exchange student on J-1 visa, your DS-2019 can arrive only after you pay eShipGlobal shipping fee. Once you have the document, only then you can apply for your respective F1- or J-1 visa. The information can also be found in the pre-arrival Checklist in iHawk and the address is ihawk.uiowa.edu. If you have any questions, please contact ISSS orientation team at their email address provided on the slide, which is isss-orientation@uiowa.edu.

Andrea: Let’s review some important dates. January 18th is the latest day to arrive to Iowa City if you plan to be here physically taking classes on campus. On January 19th through the 22nd, we will be conducting international student orientation. This orientation will be online and is mandatory. January 25th is the first day of our Spring 2021 semester.

Andrea: Let’s do presenter introductions for today.

Paul: Hello, this is Paul Natvig, I’m the director of Student Health and also a psychiatrist there.

Ian: Hello, my name is Ian Evans. I'm a staff Psychologist and the Suicide Prevention Coordinator for University Counseling Services.

Virginia: Greetings. I'm Virginia Ibrahim Olin, Director of Housing Administration with University Housing and Dining.

Carrie: Hello. I’m Carrie Miller, an Associate Director at the Academic Advising Center.
**Michael:** Hi. I’m Michael Bortscheller. I’m the Associate Director of ISSS, that’s International Student and Scholar Services.

**Andrea:** And my name is Andrea Siebenman and I am one of the ISSS advisors and also webinar coordinator and moderator for today.

**Andrea:** Let’s quickly review our webinar goals. We will review health and safety measures relating to COVID-19 as it relates to the University of Iowa. Then we will learn about mental health assistance resources, as well as we will help you understand living and dining options while staying on campus. Then you will learn also about instructional options during the Spring 2021 semester. And finally, you will hear an up-to-date travel and immigration information. At the end, we will leave some time for answering your questions live. And now the first presentation.

**Paul:** Again, this is Paul Natvig from Student Health. Thank you for inviting me and welcome to everybody to the University of Iowa. Next slide, this is Dr. Salinas who’s the epidemiologist at our hospital.

**Jorge Salinas:** Hi. I’m Jorge Salinas, hospital epidemiologist at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics. I’m going to talk to you about how, if we work together following a few simple public health recommendations, we can beat COVID. Similar to team sports, communities that work together to beat COVID fair better than communities that don’t. We have learned a lot about the COVID virus over the last few months. Now, we can utilize that knowledge to develop simple public health measures to avoid getting infected. One such a strategy is avoiding the three C’s: Avoid closed spaces with poor ventilation. Avoid crowded places with many people nearby. Avoid close contact settings, such as close-range conversations. Now that you know what to avoid, let’s go over what you should absolutely do. The three W’s: Number one, wear your mask or shield. Number two watch your distance and number three wash your hands often with hand sanitizer or soap and water.

**Paul:** So this is just a brief overview of student health and I should mention that all the information I discuss is either on our website or it’s on the coronavirus.uiowa.edu website. There are links to that on the ISSS website as well. Student health is... we are an outpatient clinic open Monday through Friday, eight to five, we provide general medicine, women's health, psychiatry, that’s what I practice. We are managing a lot of the issues related to COVID, like students requesting test treatment. Much of our treatment now is through telemedicine. We do have patients come in for various things, most things if we have concern about COVID will be done through telemedicine. So all of our appointments right now are scheduled by contacting us by phone, sending us a message mostly by phone so we can determine what’s best for you. Next slide.

**Paul:** You know as Dr. Salinas mentioned, you know, we know a lot about COVID about how people catch it, it’s from being in close quarters with people, close to people, especially indoors. We have learned that wearing a mask markedly reduced the risk of catching COVID. You want to wear a mask that has at least two layers, one that can be washable, needs at least two layers. People can also use disposable masks, they may not be as sustainable but every building has stations in the building where you can pick up a mask if you forgot yours for the day. You do want to make efforts to space yourself
from people and avoid crowds as mentioned. Indoor spaces can be difficult. What we are learning though is that even indoors, even if you're not quite more than six feet apart, wearing a mask mitigates the risk, having a good ventilation mitigates the risk. It's also very important to hygiene, washing your hands is very important. Although, most transmission of COVID seems to come through the air not through touching something. It's possible to get it that way so it's still important to wash your hands. Next slide.

Paul: What the university has done to reduce exposure to COVID is instruction is blended, many of the classes have gone online. All classes over 50 students are online. In the classroom, there's less students than normal, so more spacing can be there. Many of the staff and faculty are working remote. So on campus, it's not as crowded. In the buildings, there's signs and things directing people which ways to go to avoid congestion places such as hallways and stairwells. The University has made a lot of effort to increase the ventilation in buildings. As I mentioned earlier, that's very important; indoors is where this virus is mainly transmitted so the buildings have... more fresh air is brought in and there's higher level of filtration, all the filters on campus were upgraded to higher level filtration, there's enhanced cleaning. I should say to you too, we are not aware of any evidence of in-classroom transmission. All students and faculty are required to wear mask indoors and so the combination effects seem to have worked; we have no evidence of transmission in the classroom. So...next slide.

Paul: It's important if you're not feeling well, that you avoid others. Not any time, not every time somebody comes down with a cough or something they will have COVID but we need to be highly suspicious so anytime you have symptoms like listed here, I think many of you now are familiar with this, you want to stay home, you want to isolate yourself from others as much as possible. If you have symptoms you think are consistent with COVID, you should contact us at student health to arrange to get a test. Testing is readily available on campus for students who have symptoms, for students who've had exposures and might be a higher risk of developing COVID. The test, usually if it's done early in the day, it's actually the result is there by the end of the day, certainly by early the next day. So again, you can visit our website for up to date information about how to request a test. Next slide.

Paul: Some of this is touched on later too, but if you are testing positive, we want you to report this. There is a link where you can report that you've tested positive. If you're on campus this self-reporting will initiate a process that you can be placed in an isolation or quarantine space. Isolation goes for 10 days currently, provided things are improved. Next slide.

Paul: Close contact, again, there's a video with me later, we'll go over some of this too, is when you've been around someone who's been diagnosed with COVID and you've spent more than 15 minutes, less than six feet around them, or things like you had close contact like hugging them or they sneezed on you. If you've had a close contact, you want to be in what's called quarantine. Next slide.

Paul: Quarantine is still best to continue for 14 days. The public health will give advice on this, the person who made the diagnosis... who was helping you to arrange the quarantine can give you advice on this. But ultimately these recommendations come from public health. There are some now new guidelines to reduce the time in quarantine with testing. So next slide.
**Paul:** So currently students on campus can return to a class or a building after 10 days as long as they take a test before that. This information is often updated so it’s best to check with us about what the most up-to-date information is. Overall though, it’s still best if you have been exposed to somebody, not yet having symptoms, still spend the full 14 days in quarantine.

**Paul:** This is a link to a PDF that has a lot of good information about returning the campus, the strategies implemented by the university. Next slide.

**Paul:** As I mentioned, these are the two websites that are very helpful with up-to-date information. There are sections with frequently asked questions on the coronavirus.uiowa.edu website. Our website will give you up-to-date information on how to obtain tests, how to contact us and please I encourage anyone with questions or concerns, reach out to us. You can give us a call. You can send us a message. Oh, I do need to mention unfortunately. I need to jump off this webinar for another meeting about COVID but please if you have questions feel free to forward them to us. But again, thank you for inviting me today, and again welcome to the University of Iowa. And the next up is Dr. Ian Evans from Counseling Service.

**Ian:** Thank you, Paul, I appreciate it. As I mentioned earlier, hello everyone. My name is Ian Evans and I am a staff psychologist at the University of Iowa, University Counseling Service and I'm here to talk a little bit about the impact of mental health on, excuse me, the impact of COVID-19 on mental health and how we can support students or how can you receive support from us at University Counseling Service.

**Ian:** So, we've got a quick introductory video from our clinical director, Doctor Holly Davis.

**Holly Davis (video):** Hi everyone. I want to acknowledge that this fall semester is unlike any other and students on the campus are being challenged in really complicated ways. And while college is often a time of uncertainty and anxiety, COVID-19 has introduced new and significant concerns. We all are experiencing anxiety about becoming ill, or transmitting COVID, managing online learning, and isolation or quarantining, financial concerns and caregiving of others. We're also living in a time that has been aptly described as a dual pandemic in which we're confronted with not only COVID, but ongoing racial violence and injustice. And this presence pressure and a lack of emotional and physical safety for our students who are black, indigenous or identify as people of color, which undoubtedly impacts mental health. UCS, the counseling center here on campus, is committed to supporting and helping students who are living with these challenges. We've adapted our services to be delivered via tele-health, over Zoom or the telephone. We have drop-in friendly options, including support groups, skills-based workshops and brief consultations. We've introduced new support groups for our international students, students of color, a COVID on-campus support group, and support for students whose parents are caregivers. We've introduced new therapy groups for our black students, for female-identified students, and have a new expressive art therapy, in addition to many other offerings. If you're interested in exploring mental health options on campus, I invite you to visit mentalhealth.uiowa.edu to explore not only UCS, but many other mental health support options on campus. Consider reaching out to your friends, family, communities and others who can provide support. As help seeking is not only therapy but is reaching out to those around us. My name is Holly Davis, I'm the new clinical director at
UCS and I’m so honored to be part of the University of Iowa community and to be part of a team who is deeply committed to caring for students during these complicated times. Please reach out to us, we’re honored to help you.

Ian: So, passing onto the next slide here, I’ll quickly talk about college student mental health. And the long and short of college student mental health is that it is a very real experience. We’ve seen it being exacerbated within the context of COVID-19. Before times, before COVID, there was phenomenon, anxiety was experienced, personal concerns, depression was there including suicide ideation. So it’s a very common experience to have a mental health distress while going through your time as a college student at the University of Iowa and across the country, anywhere as a college student. And alongside this, students are going to experience various stressors, especially within the context of the pandemic whether that be interpersonal isolation, the adjustment to online learning, technology concerns, adjustment to college, all these sorts of things that are things that we want to keep in mind that can be impacting our mental health. And what the research is showing within the context of COVID, a lot of mental health concerns have worsened over this time.

Whether that would be interpersonal isolation, sadness, anxiety, loneliness, those sorts of things that are impacted by this alongside financial stress and academic stress. But another thing that I think gives me a bit of hope is that we’re also finding that students are incredibly resilient and flexible throughout this. So we’re finding people are able to thrive and meet their academic goals, and part of that experience is being able to utilize supports as necessary. And one of those supports here on campus is the University Counseling Service. We can go to the next slide.

Ian: And so what University Counseling Service provides is being able to give counseling or supportive services, being able to talk through any problems that people might be having. So that can be mental health concerns related to depression or anxiety, relationship stress, it can be trauma, it could be eating concerns, it can be a whole number of things that are here. Right now those services are free and confidential. So those services, the conversations that you have with the counselor, stay between you and the counselor with few exceptions in case there’s any immediate risk at play, whether that be the harm to self or others. So as Holly alluded to in our video, we are offering a wide range of services via zoom at this time, and this might change in the future for the fall semester of 2021. But as of right now, for the spring semester, our services are entirely virtual and that includes group therapy, individual therapy, relationship counseling, we offer support groups and other various spaces to connect with people and to meet. Get support with... might be shared identities, might be shared concerns and all sorts of things. We also have management workshops so that might be working to develop skills to minimize anxiety or depression. And we also have same day appointments that can allow for case referrals to places on campus or off, if needed. If you’re looking to schedule an appointment, you can visit our website which is listed there and we will put that in the chat: counseling.uiowa.edu. And if you’re interested in scheduling a consultation, we recommend that you’re in the state of Iowa to do so, due to our various licensure laws that are here, and we will be able to set you up with an initial appointment to talk with a counselor about what might be a good fit in terms of the services available. And lastly, I’m going to give a quick plug for our Instagram and Facebook pages, we provide a lot of great
resources and ... infographics that are there, so follow us at @UIowaUCS on each of those. Thank you and welcome to University of Iowa.

Virginia: Hi everyone! This is Virginia and I’m going to speak with you briefly about living and dining on campus. To start us off, we've got a video actually from our own Dr. Netvig, who you met earlier, to talk a little bit about isolation and quarantine.

Paul Natvig (Video): I want to talk to you today about isolation and quarantine. Both are public health practices that prevent the transmission of contagious diseases such as COVID-19. Isolation is for those who have been infected and generally last for 10 days. Quarantine is for those who have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 and lasts 14 days. So one way to think of this is that infection and isolation both start with an “I”. Quarantine is for those who are questioning whether they will develop COVID, and both start with a Q. In both isolation and quarantine, you should stay at home except to get medical care. You should separate yourself from others who are not infected.

Isolation again, is for those who are infected with the virus that causes COVID-19, they will have had a positive test but they may or may not have symptoms. Isolation can end when the following conditions are met: it has been 10 days since the onset of your symptoms, and you’ve had at least 24 hours without a fever, without using medication such as Tylenol, and your symptoms are improving. If the onset of your symptoms are not clear or you had no symptoms, then you should isolate for 10 days from the date of the positive test, in most cases you do not need to test again. Quarantine is for those who have had a close contact with someone who has COVID-19. Close contact is defined as being within six feet of someone for more than 15 minutes, providing care for someone at home, direct contacts such as hugging or kissing, sharing, eating or drinking utensils, having someone sneeze or cough on you. Public health might also define close contact as spending an extended amount of time in an enclosed space with someone who has COVID, even if you did not come within 6 feet. After exposure to someone with COVID, not everyone will become infected. Infections can develop as early as a few days, but some can take up to 14 days. Because of this you should remain in quarantine for the full 14 days. While in quarantine, you should monitor for symptoms such as fever, cough or shortness of breath. If you develop symptoms, you should arrange to get tested. If you do not develop symptoms, you should consult with your health care provider or public health about recommendations for testing. Even if you have a negative test while in quarantine, you should continue to isolate for the full 14 days. If though you do have a positive test while in quarantine, you would now be considered infected and you will need to isolate for another 10 days. Know if you have tested positive for COVID-19, you do not need to quarantine for 90 days after the positive test if you have a new exposure.

Virginia: There are a number of steps that University Housing and Dining has taken in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19. All students, faculty and staff are required to wear a face mask, you may choose to wear a face shield as well, but you must still wear a mask underneath. We have limited our guest policy to one per student and there are no more than four people allowed in a double room, so each occupant may have a friend over. Space has been designated for students that may test positive for COVID-19 and need relocate. So just as Paul has discussed, moving into either quarantine or isolation. Staff will be helping with the monitoring but ultimately, it's that diagnosing health professional that would connect with you and tell you what to do in the event of your illness. However, we’re providing
meal delivery for those students seven days a week. Additionally, we have updated our cleaning protocols throughout the residence halls in accordance with guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control.

Virginia: I am adding a link to the chat so that way you could view all of the changes that we have made for this year. Now, living in the residence halls is a unique experience and you often will have a roommate relationship. However, if you are living off campus, some of this information may also apply to you. We encourage everyone to talk with your roommate now. You’re obviously trying to coordinate what you’re bringing and when you’re going to be moving in. It’s important to discuss guests that may be present in helping you move in, even if you’re traveling from afar, and how you’re feeling, both physically and emotionally about the process. And as always, where you can reach out, once you’re in Iowa, to Ian’s team at University Counseling Service. Now, we facilitate roommate agreements with all of our students in the first few weeks of each semester. These will cover COVID-19 precautions, conflict management and what it means to create a home.

We find that the assistance of resident assistants will be helpful for everyone to be able to talk through the unique pieces related to COVID-19 and our different values systems.

Virginia: Within University Dining, which is open to everyone across campus, we have implemented a number of measures to prevent COVID-19. First and foremost, we have a touchless payment system. So if you have a meal plan, whether you live on campus or off, or you just may be purchasing a one-time meal, your payment will be touchless. We have discontinued all self-service food, so if you come through to one of our marketplaces, our staff will serve you. We are adding and encouraging use of an online ordering system through GrubHub and many pick up locations across campus. We have added lots of physical barriers to minimize respiratory contacts between staff and students and any employee that works for us goes through monitoring each time they start a shift on campus. If there’s any concern at all that someone may be ill, they will not be working for that temporary period.

Virginia: If you’d like to learn more about what we have done, here is a link to the dining changes for Spring 2021. Now if you will have a meal plan, there’re a few ways that you can use it, through online ordering, and that's through the GrubHub app, or you can stop by in one of our retail locations where you can pick up an online order for that as well. Within our marketplaces, we have something called Express dining and that’s where you would walk through, pick out the specific items that you’d like to eat and then take it with you to go to eat somewhere safely. You will make a reservation online for your specific time to stop by and pick up your food items. Then the third option that we have is flex meals and those are quick to-go meals that you could pick up at a number of our retail locations. And the next slide outlines where those are...

Virginia: ... all throughout campus. Many popular locations include the Iowa Memorial Union, our Clinton Street and Grand Avenue Market, and the ever-popular Food for Thought Cafe in the main library. That is one of the most popular locations.

Virginia: Now if you happen to be living in the residence halls and are not feeling well, there are a number of ... things that we would ask you to do. Number one: follow these instructions from our
student health staff, and I've typed the address for you to follow that website online. We ask that you report your status to campus as everyone is required to do in the event that you are positive with COVID-19. We ask you to self-isolate, wear a mask and order your meals online. A University Housing and Dining staff member will follow up with every student who reports that they are either positive for COVID-19 or have been designated a close contact. If you happen to report your status in the evening, we’ll contact you the next day. And then the last thing that we do ask you to do is to stay away from others when you’re traveling in and out of the building just to do your best to keep everyone safe.

Virginia: So what I'd like to do now is to have you connect with our colleague, Carrie Miller.

Carrie: Thanks Virginia. I’m Carrie, an Associate Director at the Academic Advising Center. We are excited you will be joining us this spring semester. Whether you’ll be in Iowa City this spring or in another part of the world joining us remotely. We’re ready to help you set yourself up for success.

Carrie: I believe Andrea will be posting a video to the new international student website with more information about how the university has prepared the physical spaces on campus for students and our staff. Today, I’m going to spend a few minutes talking about instructional options and also preparing for academics this spring semester.

Each classroom is set up with technology for instructors to host a variety of instruction modes. This includes web, hybrid and face to face. Web indicates the course will be taught entirely online. Courses listed as web may be asynchronous or synchronous. If the course is synchronous, a specific day and time will be listed.

Some web courses may be both asynchronous and synchronous. Hybrid tells you that the course has a component that is online and a component that may be in-person. Some may be listed with a student rotation where students will rotate on a set schedule between face to face and virtual instruction. Other hybrid courses may not have rotation. This will vary from course to course and will also be listed in the course description. Face to face indicates the course’s plan to be in person, held in a university classroom or instructional space. I know these are a lot of options and maybe confusing. But that’s why it’s so important to read the course descriptions and MyUI very carefully and to work with your academic advisor to find the best course schedule for you. If you have general questions about the delivery mode options, the Office of the Register has a helpful link breaking down each option. The link is on the screen. Spring courses are listed on MyUI, the online student system, used at the University of Iowa. On the slide, there’s a direct link to MyUI as well. Under courses and registration, students can view the course offerings for the spring semester. The delivery mode will be listed in the notes area as part of the course description. It will be important for you to think about what instruction mode will work best for you during spring semester. Keep in mind that as a new international student, there are specific immigration guidance for instruction modes, you will need to follow. Michael will share more about this information in the next part of the webinar.
Carrie: If you have questions about the instruction mode for specific classes, it'll be best to work directly with your instructor or your academic advisor. Next, I'm going to move on and talk a little bit about preparing for your spring semester academically. Communication will be key as you start your university experience. Communication with your instructors and your academic advisor will be important as you plan for spring and throughout the semester. Academic advising begins as part of the international orientation experience.

All new undergraduate students will work with an academic advisor and be assigned an orientation advising appointment. Appointments will be held through Zoom on Thursday January 21st. You will receive an email mid-January with a specific link for zoom and information about your appointment. During this meeting it will be important for you to share your academic goals with your advisor, this is a time with your academic advisor to help review your degree audit, a document that tracks your academic progress at Iowa, as well as select and register for your spring semester course schedule. Before your appointment, it’s helpful and important that you complete and necessary placement exams. If you plan to study a subject that requires math or chemistry, it’s important to complete the placement exam prior to your advising appointment. Information on placement exams can be found on the new information student website, new international student website, excuse me. Be sure to complete the English placement exam if needed. I believe the practice exam will be held January 13th and the actual exam will be on January 14th. Students needing to complete the English placement exam will not be able to meet with their academic advisor until the exam is completed.

The orientation tile located in myUI and the new international student orientation website will both help you with the steps to prepare for spring semester. Your orientation advising appointment will mark the beginning of working with your academic advisor. Throughout spring semester, you will be encouraged to continue working with your advisor to discuss your goals, talk about your transition to the University and plan for future semesters. Beyond your advisor, if you have a specific question about a course at Iowa, a good place to start is by reviewing your syllabus. At the beginning of the semester, you will receive a syllabus for each one of your spring courses. Usually, the syllabus can be found on ICON, the central course management system at Iowa, or will be given to you by your instructor. A syllabus is a document that will have a schedule of the semester for the specific course, the attendance policy and any expectations as well as the contact information for the instructor. Review this information for each one of your classes. If you have questions or concerns in the class, contact your instructor, they want to help. Your instructors and academic advisors are wonderful individuals for you to connect with to help be successful at the University of Iowa. If you have questions or concerns, please ask. We look forward to working with you. And now, I believe Michael will continue to talk a little bit more on behalf of ISSS.

Michael: Alright, well, thank you everybody for listening. I do apologize if you hear my dog barking in the background. He’s decided he wants to be on the recording, I think. So, I apologize in advance. But I’m just going to talk a little bit about some of the specific travel information and immigration information that’s unique to the COVID-19 pandemic and some of the things that have changed because of that.

Michael: So, the current travel restrictions that we have because of COVID-19. One thing I just want to mention because it is a common misconception from a lot of people, there is no mandatory quarantine
or self-isolation when you arrive in the US or when you arrive at the University of Iowa. Even though there's no mandatory quarantine, we do encourage students to monitor themselves for symptoms after they travel. When you travel internationally, you're going to come into contact with a lot of people. So, it's important that you just maintain some precaution in the 14 days or so after that period of travel. Now, there is one COVID entry restriction that affects students who are either living in or passing through some countries. Those countries are Brazil, China, Iran, Ireland, United Kingdom and the Schengen Area which includes many countries in Europe. I have them all listed on the screen right now but I am not going to read through every country on the list. If you are either living in, or if your travel will have you passing through any of those countries, you must wait 14 days somewhere else before you can enter the US. That's terribly inconvenient and we're hopeful that that can change soon but for the spring semester, that's going to be the situation. Now, if you will be in the Schengen area, Ireland or the United Kingdom, it is possible to apply for a national interest exception since you'll be coming as international students. But for everyone else, if you're going to be in one of these places, unfortunately, you just have to figure out with your travel plans how you can spend 14 days somewhere else before you enter the United States.

**Michael:** There are also, or there is also some specific registration requirements that are unique because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Now, the government, the US government, has not provided any new guidance for spring 2021. What that means is the guidance that we received in spring 2020 and fall 2020 still applies. So, here's what that guidance is: any new student, which is a student coming to the US from outside the country to start a program, must be registered for at least one in-person semester hour or credit. When Carrie was speaking earlier, she talked about courses having a face-to-face component and that's what we mean when we say in-person. It has to have some sort of face-to-face requirement. In addition to that, new students who are in the US must register full time. For an undergraduate student that's twelve semester hours and for a graduate student, that is nine semester hours. A continuing student in the US is someone who is either in continuing their study at the University of Iowa, or a student who is transferring from another school without leaving the country, another school in the US without leaving the country. Continuing students can register completely online. But they do still have to maintain that full-time registration. 12 semester hours for undergraduates, 9 semester hours for graduates. Students who are studying from outside the US - so brand new students who are beginning their program, but they're not going to come to the United States - have no restrictions. That means you can study completely online, it means you could study for three semester hours if you wanted to or twelve or eighteen, whatever you want. If you're not going to enter the US, you do not have any immigration restrictions on you. Now, you may still have academic requirements and that's why it's really important to work with your academic advisor, like Carrie talked about. That's all that I have for the travel restrictions and registration requirements and so I'm going to pass it off now to Andrea for the Q&A.

**Q&A Part**

**Andrea:** Thank you so much Michael and thank you all presenters for wonderful information regarding this topic for today. And we do have several questions that we have received and we will be answering them live now for those who are participating in the webinar.
This first question is about the counseling and specifically, whether student can start counseling zoom appointment even in the days before they arrive to the US just so they know how do they do this, after they come to the United States, and if they need to continue with those counseling sessions. Perhaps Ian could help answer this?

**Ian:** I can help and answer that one. It’s a great question. There are a few considerations that we have with our students who are currently out of the country right now. Within the COVID-19 pandemic, one of the things that we are navigating is the legal ability to practice outside the state of Iowa. The mass majority of our clinicians, excuse me, are licensed in the state of Iowa and can only practice therapy services within the state. There have been a few instances of states who have allowed us to practice across those state borders and that helps us kind of with practicing via tele-health in that way. Now, that does not mean that you’re ineligible completely for services at this time. That restriction is primarily for our therapeutic services, so if you’re looking to utilize our support services or workshops. Those are things that we can provide while you’re outside of Iowa at this time. So if you’re curious as to what services you might be eligible for, you can give us a call at that number that I located, or listed earlier on and we’ll put in the chat in here and you can schedule a quick phone conversation with one of our clinicians or one of our front desk staff to kind of clarify what that might be. But if you’re really interested in let’s say group therapy, or individual therapy, we’d recommend that you give us a call to schedule. You can schedule the appointment while you’re out of Iowa, but when the appointment happens, you’d have to be within the State.

**Andrea:** Thank you very much Ian, that was very helpful. And in fact, we do have another question that is related to your services. And specifically, the student is asking that if they have received any counseling or psychiatric care in their home country. How can they have their records sent to counseling so that whoever they will be working with in your office will have and be informed of their history.

**Ian:** It’s a great question. One of the things that we want to ensure both at UCS and with student health, I’ll speak on behalf of Dr. Natvig, one of the things that we really value is continuity of care, so making sure that we’re not starting over, from the beginning of this. So one of the things that we can do if you’re wanting to establish your counseling services or health care through student health or through UCS, one of the things that I’d recommend is having a conversation with your provider or counselor about how to get those records. And essentially what we would have to do, due to the confidential nature of our work, is we would sign a release of information. Now, that’ll give us permission to contact your other provider and once that happens and you give us that permission, it’s a pretty smooth process. Those files can be emailed to us, those files can be faxed to us or if you have hard copies of those files, if for instance student health is in-person, you may be able to bring those copies with you for that. So, that could be an option for you.

**Andrea:** Thank you so much and thank you for answering on behalf of the student health as well. So the next question is sort of related to the situation in Iowa City and the student is asking what it looks like in Iowa City currently. Specifically, is there any lockdown or are people walking freely around the city. Would anyone be willing to answer that question just briefly and provide some insight.
Michael: I don’t mind answering that. The situation in Iowa City is not one where there is a lockdown but it is one where things are much less busy than they normally would be. There is a requirement in the county where Iowa City is that requires people to wear masks whenever they’re indoors and of course the University of Iowa has policies in place that everybody must wear masks when they’re on campus and limiting how large gatherings can be and so while things are not locked down and you will still see people out. But it’s very much less congested and less busy than what it looks like in many of the University’s promotional materials.

Andrea: Excellent, thank you so much Michael and we did have another actually related question that was asking about the concerns of the local Iowa City community and in general about perhaps international students bringing in the COVID-19 from abroad when they travel in and they heard some reports that there was not a very favorable look towards international students in that regard. And I don’t know if Ian or Michael would like to address this question or concern.

Michael: I don’t know if Ian wants to talk but I can definitely say that while there may have been or I’m aware of some people reacting that way when COVID-19 was first becoming prominent in the US. That is not something that we have seen lately. So when there were first starting to be cases of COVID-19 in the United States, we did hear a few isolated reports of people just having, to be perfectly frank, a racist reaction, seeing somebody who they believed to be of Asian descent and trying to hustle away or fearing that they were going to catch this disease from them, stuff that was completely absurd and that the University and that everybody condemns. However, since the outbreak, the conditions now are just completely different. And so now we have not heard of any kind of report like that. In fact, people are just trying to stay away from everyone right now.

Ian: I can echo that. University Counseling Service, we certainly saw and heard of experiences of racism initially as the pandemic made its way to the United States. And I think alongside that was a lot of fear and the projection of that fear was, unfortunately as Michael properly put that as, came out in racist expression. But now that the pandemic has become more globalized and more localized, we are seeing a collective experience. We have not, to my knowledge, seen as much, if any, of that experience locally here in Iowa City.

Andrea: Thank you both so much, this was very helpful and I hope that it helped dissipate the concerns that the someone who asked the question had. The next question would be if again, I believe that Michael may have mentioned this but I will repeat the question is that, we’re having a question from a transfer student, and they are starting their PhD program here at the University of Iowa. And the question is whether do they have necessarily have to register for at least one face-to-face course for spring 2021 semester.

Michael: So if you are transferring and you do not leave the United States, then you don’t have a requirement to register for any in-person courses. So if you studied at your previous institution, you know up until December, you’re going to begin your studies here at the University of Iowa in January and you don’t leave the US, that is fine. And this is the confusing part, if you leave the US though, it
suddenly becomes considered differently and so if you're not sure or if you're confused, please don't hesitate to email us at isss-orientation@uiowa.edu and I will include that email address in the chat just as soon as I'm done talking here.

Andrea: Thank you so much Michael, I appreciate that. Let's go move on to some questions that we had actually received regarding the dining services. First part of the question was about the on-campus job opportunity in the dining services and whether there are any concerns about students being able to actually help or work in dining services due to COVID reasons. So Virginia, would you like to address that question?

Virginia: Yes. Hi everyone. University Housing and Dining employs a number of student employees, including international students. We would be more than happy to have you join our team, even in this difficult time of COVID. Our dining team has put a number of measures in place to protect not only our students who may be picking up food to go but also for the student employees that work for us. I mentioned earlier that everyone is screened at the start of their shift. They've also tried to implement as much social distancing in the kitchens as possible. And again, we would be more than happy to have you work with us. So far it has been quite safe and a number of our students have enjoyed the opportunity to get to know fellow Hawkeyes while working together.

Andrea: Thank you so much. That's great and I actually see another question that is related to dining services and that was actually, or you could help address, Virginia. We trust about the safe opportunities for students to kind of make friends with the American student counterparts and what would be the safe ways for them to meet outside of their living arrangements. And if you can help address that question.

Virginia: Sure, there are a number of ways of course students to meet fellow Hawkeyes, both international and domestic. And the first place that that will start is through your orientation experience your first few days here in Iowa City. The other opportunity to connect with folks both personally and virtually, depending on what you feel comfortable with, would be through our spring welcome. And I've just posted in the chat a link to the OnIowa events that we will be having this spring. All you have to do is click on the links and you'll be able to join. Folks will be very happy to have you and introduce you to all the different great student organizations that are still getting together in serving campus during this time.

Andrea: Thank you very much and in fact I would like to add a quick information about the international student orientation that ISSS is conducting and we are actually trying to introduce students mutually within small groups that we work with during the orientation week. And so that provides a nice introduction to other international students. It's not necessarily that you would meet American students, although some of the leaders of those small groups are American students. And they have been studying here at the University. They could be undergrad, so graduate students. So that will be an opportunity for you to ask them for questions and meet some new friends. So just thought I would add that. The next question is pretty straightforward. When we arrive in Iowa City, where do we go first? So perhaps Michael would be willing to help answer that question for our students.
Michael: Well, I suppose it depends on your circumstances. I mean, when you arrive in Iowa City, let me put it this way, for our orientation, everything is going to be online. So there’s no requirement for you to go to a specific place for orientation or anything like that. So as far as the first place to go for the orientation, it’s not a place you’re going to go physically but you’re going to you know fire up that internet browser and go to myui.uiowa.edu and complete your orientation tile, if you haven’t done that already. There you should find information about your orientation schedule and things like that, so that you can attend the virtual orientation that we have set up for you. In addition to that, if you have any questions about the Iowa City area or any sort-of office on-campus that you’re hoping to visit, I recommend that you meet with an ISSS advisor. And right now our ISSS advisors are meeting virtually. We have zoom sessions that you can attend. You can also go to the new students page that Andrea has just linked into the chat and I’m going to share instructions for signing up for a zoom meeting with one of the ISSS advisors. So if there’s anything on-campus that you need to find, you can actually meet with an ISSS advisor, talk about what you’re looking for. You know, if you want to know where to find a bike in Iowa City or what are good places to order food from, we’re more than happy to help you out with things like that. So you can meet with an advisor and get answers right away by signing up for one of our virtual walk-in appointments there.

Andrea: Perfect, thank you so much Michael, thank you. And we do actually have a question that you can help answer as well and you have kind-of mentioned during your part of presentation about the restrictions of travel from certain countries and so student is basically asking if they’re from the country not on the restrictions list but they’re still be the transferring through a European airport on their way to the US, would they be subject to the restriction for travel, for entry to the US?

Michael: Yeah, unfortunately anyone who is not a US citizen who passes through one of those countries cannot enter the US for 14 days. Does not matter if you’re not a citizen of those countries, just passing through them, you’re not a US citizen means, that you have to wait 14 days before entering into the US. That includes a transit flight.

Andrea: All right, thank you and we do have one last question and it’s just basically a request for confirmation that the Iowa City area is safe in reflection of the recent unrest in the United States of which did happen in other parts of the US but there is still a concern from parents. But the student who are concerned about the student traveling to the US, so can we just confirm that the Iowa City situation is still safe for students to travel to, despite the news.

Michael: I don’t know if anybody else wants to speak. I’m sure Virginia might be able to speak about the situation in housing specifically, if somebody’s coming to live on campus. But I can say very generally that the situation that is happening in Washington D.C. is not happening in Iowa City. We are not the state capital here. We are not a center of government and so we have not seen anything resembling that kind-of conflict. Iowa City is a college town, which means there are you know, some levels of petty crime and things like that that you do have to be aware of but as a relative to the US as a whole, this is actually a fairly safe community. That’s kind of an understated way. Our levels of crime are far below what you would find in many parts of the US.
Virginia: Yeah, thanks for asking. So within University Housing and Dining, we do have fairly safe residence halls, there are common things as Michael had indicated, that happened any time. You have several hundred people that all live in one building together. However, related to the recent political unrest, our staff have a number of conversations about and in trainings related to engaging in dialogue with one another and so that way we can grow, we can understand and we can move forward as a community. If there were ever instants of violence, we have very exact protocols and would have a very swift response with support from local law enforcement on-campus. So, if you'd like to learn more about what our policies might be, I’m happy to share those with you.

Andrea: Thank you so much both for answering this question, which was very timely and understandable all concerned in regard to the recent developments. So this is the last question of our Q&A portion of the webinar and we have only a minute left to close our webinar. You may have seen that I have posted a brief request for you to complete a webinar survey with your feedback. We really appreciate any information you can give us on this webinar and whether you found it informative and what other suggestions you may have.

Andrea: And then these are a couple of reminders about the resources that you have as new international students, it’s the website that we already posted in the chat, which is international.uiowa.edu/new-students and then also please remember that you can reach to us by email at the isss-orientation@uiowa.edu, which is our orientation team. Thank you so much for attending today, we appreciate your participation and we look forward to welcoming you to the University of Iowa. Goodbye.