

Dear Friends,

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought a devastating loss of life across the globe and in our state. It has caused unparalleled disruption and alarm to people everywhere. Here in Connecticut, it has sickened people, closed businesses, and forced UConn to move all of our classes online for the duration of the spring 2020 semester.

And while none of us has been left unaffected by the pandemic, it has fallen especially hard on our international students, a number of whom have remained on the Storrs campus and elsewhere in the state, and who, like many others, are unable to return home and are worried about family and friends thousands of miles away.

It is for this reason that I am inviting all of our international students to join me and others for a special “virtual” town hall meeting, convened by the Office of Global Affairs, on Tuesday, April 14 from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. I want you to know how deeply we care for you, and we want to hear from our international student population directly about your experiences and how you are holding up. This will also be an opportunity to ask any questions you have about the University’s response to the pandemic and what resources are available to you.

As we get closer to that date, information on how to participate will be sent to you. In the meantime, please send any questions or comments that you would like to see addressed during the town hall to communications@uconn.edu.

There is one topic that may come up that I want to address here. I have been deeply disturbed by reports from around the country of harassment and threats directed against Asian Americans and Asian visitors to the U.S. in the wake of the pandemic, and against people from China in particular. That this is amplified rather than quelled by reckless rhetoric from some prominent public leaders is even more upsetting.

UConn has a long tradition of standing against exactly this sort of ignorance. During World War II, this was the only university in Connecticut that enrolled Japanese American students, at a time when that community was being shamefully forced into internment camps.

We stood by our students then, and we stand by our students now. Bigotry of any kind has no place in a free society, and certainly not in a community rooted in scholarship and learning. We will treat any reports of mistreatment of members of our community with the utmost gravity.

Regardless where our students come from, UConn will always be your home. That’s why I hope you’ll join me, along with my colleagues from Global Affairs, Enrollment and Student Affairs, at the virtual town hall dedicated to your questions and concerns. You are an essential part of our community, and we want you to feel safe and valued here, in your home away from home.

Warm Regards,

Tom

Thomas Katsouleas
President
University of Connecticut