As we continue to navigate the threats associated with COVID-19, we are all strongly reminded of our world's interconnectedness more than ever. Our social and economic globalization is being challenged, yet the value and importance of our ties with the world around us amplify why the work of the Office of International Programs (OIP) in collaboration with the 49er community is so crucial.

As most of you are already aware, the impact of COVID-19 has been considerable on OIP. What began as one program cancellation to China in late January soon cascaded to the suspension of all of our programs and subsequent recall of every UNC Charlotte student studying worldwide. Soon thereafter every upcoming summer program abroad was cancelled.

In addition, we have had numerous cancellations of group programs inbound to UNC Charlotte this spring and summer. Many of our international students, both degree-seeking and exchange, have returned to their home countries, and we sincerely hope that degree-seeking students intending to return in the fall will be able to do so. While this has been one of the most difficult challenges OIP has ever faced, it would have been far more difficult were it not for the partnerships that we have with our OIP extended family, UNC Charlotte faculty and staff.

Our faculty and staff partners were instrumental in minimizing the adverse impact this has on our student community. OIP greatly appreciates the willingness of the various colleges and departments to identify alternative coursework for our students who were required to return home from their spring semester education abroad programs. We also sincerely value the consideration you have given to our international students in this time of crisis while they are so far away from home.

We would like to recognize and express our gratitude to all of the faculty who were planning spring and summer study abroad programs that have been canceled. We understand you worked tirelessly to develop these thoughtful international education experiences. When travel returns to a more normal status, we hope that you consider re-offering these wonderful opportunities that you have so carefully developed.

Whether leading an education abroad program, supporting our international students, or engaging in our on-campus internationalization programs, we recognize that it takes an ecosystem of international educators like all of you to provide our students with these valuable experiences. While COVID-19 has required us to make unprecedented modifications, we look forward to your ongoing partnership. Your contributions to the very important international education and global learning programs on our campus do provide transformational experiences to our students and we look forward to developing
creative and innovative programs with you in the future. We are currently building out resources that support cross-border connections and engagement using technology during these difficult times, and more news on that initiative is forthcoming.

Thank you again for all that you do to support our international and global learning programs. Go Global Niners!

Sincerely,

Joël Gallegos, Assistant Provost
Office of International Programs
UNC Charlotte