Dear Students/Global Spiders:

We write to you with news that we know will be disappointing, but we hope there is some comfort later in this message also. In consultation with the Provost, and after considerable review and reflection, we have reluctantly reached the decision that it is necessary to cancel Fall 2020 study abroad programming.

We wanted to communicate this decision immediately, because we want you to be able to land on your feet this autumn during a very challenging year. If we thought that waiting to make a final decision might produce a different outcome, we would have done so, but we do not see that a different conclusion will be possible.

We also want to be clear about the factors that influenced this decision.

**High uncertainty:** None of the areas of concern we mentioned in previous correspondence has been resolved. These include the ability to obtain necessary visas, re-establishment of regular international air travel, and the return of mobility within and between countries. All of these indicators are still greatly reduced and unpredictable. And many countries still have and are adding barriers to entry, such as a two-week quarantine period after arrival at the expense of the traveler. Many of our partners have also indicated that they cannot guarantee the kind of rich and immersive experience you signed up for.

**Ongoing concern about mobility:** It is very likely that even if you were able to reach the country of study, you would face significantly impaired mobility, between countries, within a country, and even within your city of residence. If you intended to travel and explore during the semester abroad, you would run the risk of significant travel disruptions or prohibitions by changing policies in what will continue to be an unpredictable climate. If conditions worsen during the fall semester, you might be unable to travel back to your home country at that time.

**State Department and Centers for Disease Control Warnings:** Both of these travel indicators are currently at the highest possible alerts, at which UR does not endorse travel. Neither the US State Department (Global level 4 health advisory: do not travel) nor the CDC (Level 3 travel health notice) has indicated that they plan to lower these alerts.
In short, a global pandemic does not encourage mobility. We feel strongly that to do our best to ensure that we protect the health of our students and those most vulnerable, we cannot pursue study abroad for Fall 2020. We know that students who are scheduled to go on a year-long program and international students who registered for study abroad will require additional advising and further discussion. We ask that these students reach out immediately to their study abroad advisor.

Your next steps for registration and housing: With respect to making plans for the fall at the University of Richmond, please remember to enter your course preferences in the BannerWeb survey by May 29. The Registrar’s Office is planning to offer a special registration period for you starting on June 22. For housing, the Residence Life & Housing team asks that all students complete this quick form by Friday, May 29th to indicate your preferences. Since available housing is limited, they may not be able to accommodate all requests. The Office of Residence Life & Housing is currently exploring and developing contingency plans for the fall. Information will be made available to students about housing in July.

We hope for improved mobility for the spring and summer of 2021; if you would like to defer your study abroad to Spring 2021 or another time, please contact your study abroad advisor. Our colleagues at the International Business Program Office in the Robins School are also available for consultation and support. We are optimistic that when this pandemic diminishes and we begin living the “new normal,” countries will once again be open to facilitate international cooperation, exchange, and mutual learning. Our futures will certainly be brighter as your generation continues the quest for culturally rich understanding and partnership.

We are available to you for questions and concerns.

With our best wishes,

Dean Merritt and the International Education Team