January 28, 2020

Dear SYA China Parents,

You have either welcomed, or soon will welcome back, your child from Beijing. As you know, in making the decision to have students leave China as a result of the coronavirus, we consider health and safety to be our top priorities.

I write now to provide next steps in terms of our students’ academic study for the remainder of this school year. We have been weighing all available information about the coronavirus obtained from the governments, health organizations, and other school sources as we evaluate our options. If we knew that the disruption would only be for a short time, we could work online using distance learning until a return to Beijing would allow us to resume the experiential and personal components in China that are so central to the full SYA experience. However, from all our sources there is currently no clear sense that constraints will be lifted in the near term. This uncertainty presents us with our greatest challenge for a path forward.

Along with safety, your child’s education is our highest priority. We want to maintain as much stability to the school year for our students as possible. After much consultation and careful consideration, we have developed two options. Given the complexities of the situation, we ask that you select and commit to the one option that works best for your child on or before Saturday, February 1.

OPTION ONE: RETURN TO YOUR SENDING SCHOOL

Integrating students back in to the sending school provides stability and a defined path forward. Given the time of year, students would be returning roughly at the start of the second semester. We will be writing to the heads of school about this possibility. From an administrative perspective, we will treat the SYA program as a semester program with both grades and financial aspects calculated through the end of the first semester. We will work with you and your sending school as required to identify and adjust funds accordingly. SYA China would hold a week (Feb 3-7) of re-entry discussions and activities. This will allow students a chance to tie up the academic loose ends of their SYA China program and provide the time necessary to say goodbye to faculty and friends, before starting back at their sending school on or about February 10.

OPTION TWO: REMAIN WITH SYA FOR THE REMAINDER OF THIS SCHOOL YEAR

There are some students in our program for whom returning to their sending school is a challenging or undesirable option. Option Two is designed for the student who would prefer to stay with SYA for the remainder of the year, even if it means a change in location. Students who select Option Two will do online course work from home with our Beijing faculty for a month, until February 24. At that time, we will
reevaluate whether we will restart our classes in Beijing. If, at that time, returning to Beijing is not an option, these students will move to our campus in Viterbo, Italy, for the remainder of the school year. If that occurs, Option Two students would continue in our math and English courses, which are structured in the same across all campuses, and begin entry level Italian and other courses (TBD) to ensure that they return home with the credits they need. All students will also live with a local Italian host family. These students would immediately integrate with our SYA students already in Italy. Although this option will involve some challenges, including some we have not yet foreseen, we are working hard with our team in Viterbo to ensure a strong SYA experience for these students and we believe we can make this work.

Due the complexities of the situation, we will NOT be able to accommodate any change in plans from the one you commit to by February 1. Remember that Option Two is not for the faint of heart. We will do all we can to make it work and ask for your flexibility as we move along. In a sense, this experience is what SYA is all about—learning to navigate in a challenging world.

I know there is a lot to process as you make this decision, and the decision for some right now will not be easy. I want to be in touch with each family to learn of your choice made by February 1 and to support you to make that option succeed. Toward that end, please reach out to me first through email with your thoughts and then we can arrange a time for a call. I look forward to hearing from you.

In closing, whichever option you and your child select, they will always remember their time in Beijing and treasure that experience. Please know that we will also continue to work with our host families and local faculty to support them as well through this crisis, as they are the essence of SYA China.

[Signature]

Thomas E Hassan
SYA President