

May 6, 2026

The Honorable Mora Namdar
Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Consular Affairs
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Assistant Secretary Namdar,

On behalf of the American Council on Education and the undersigned major higher education associations, we write to ask the U.S. Department of State to once again prioritize the processing of international student and scholar visas for the upcoming peak season, ahead of the fall academic semester. Previous administrations, including the first Trump administration, prioritized the processing of student visas, helping provide certainty to international students, our institutions, and the consular officers working at U.S. missions abroad.

The increase in student visa applications from spring through August for U.S. fall semester arrivals can result in limited appointment availability, long wait times for interviews, and potential visa processing delays that would impact the ability of students to arrive on time for their academic programs. In light of increased screening requirements, such as social media vetting¹, streamlining the application review process during the upcoming peak season is crucial for preventing a backlog of applications. Consistent with the approach of previous administrations, it is imperative that consular posts receive clear direction to prioritize student interview appointments and visa application processing, ensuring there are no unnecessary delays for students looking to arrive for the start of the fall academic term in the United States.

We recognize the necessity of a thorough vetting process. At the same time, it is important to ensure access to visa appointments. Delays can hinder the ability of U.S. colleges and universities to attract global talent. Growing concerns about the visa application process and increased U.S. travel restrictions have created an environment of uncertainty for international scholars.² As the administration takes steps that may dampen interest of prospective students and deter enrollment, other nations—including the United Kingdom, European Union members, and China—are aggressively capitalizing on our losses and attracting global talent. In order to maintain U.S. global competitiveness, visa processing must remain predictable.

When international students are unable to secure timely appointments or are unable to receive proper visa issuance, the cost to the United States is profound:

¹ June 18, 2025. U.S. Department of State “Announcement of Expanded Screening and Vetting for Visa Applicants”: <https://www.state.gov/releases/office-of-the-spokesperson/2025/06/announcement-of-expanded-screening-and-vetting-for-visa-applicants>

² November 21, 2025. American Council on Education “International Student Enrollment Slows as Concerns About the Visa Application Process Rise”: <https://www.acenet.edu/News-Room/Pages/Open-Doors-2025.aspx#:~:text=Ninety-six%20percent%20of%20institutions,to%20study%20in%20other%20countries>

- International students contribute nearly \$43 billion annually to local U.S. communities and support more than 355,000 American jobs.³
- Every three international students who study here create one American job.⁴
- International talent grows the STEM pipeline. Approximately 57 percent of international students pursue STEM degrees, and they make up nearly half of the graduates in U.S. STEM master's and doctoral programs.⁵
- The U.S. leads in artificial intelligence, partly because of international talent, with 70 percent of full-time graduate students in AI-related fields being international students. Furthermore, half of all STEM workers with advanced degrees in defense-related industries are foreign-born.⁶
- International enrollment keeps academic programs viable and affordable for domestic students. At U.S. public universities, the enrollment of a single international student enables two additional domestic students to attend.⁷

President Trump has publicly stated that cutting off international students from our college and university system would be harmful.⁸ We respectfully request that you prioritize student visa processing to ensure our national competitiveness for years to come.

While we ask that you prioritize student visa processing in the upcoming months, we would also appreciate a briefing for the higher education community regarding how the State Department is implementing the new screening policies and ensuring the continued timely processing of student visas. We welcome the opportunity to meet with your staff to discuss anticipated demand and ensure America's colleges and universities remain the top destination for global talent. Thank you for your time and attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,



Ted Mitchell, President

On behalf of:

³ July 25, 2025. NASFA: Association of International Educators “International Student Economic Value Tool – Benefits from International Students”: https://www.nafsa.org/sites/default/files/media/document/EconValue2025_v01_11-12-2025.pdf

⁴ November 17, 2025. NASFA: Association of International Educators “2024-2025 economic activity declined compared to previous academic year”: <https://www.nafsa.org/about/about-nafsa/international-students-contributed-43-billion-us-economy-2024-2025-fall-2025>

⁵ November 17, 2025. Open Doors “Annual Release: International Students”: <https://opendoorsdata.org/annual-release/international-students/#:~:text=The%20majority%20of%20students%20studied,largest%20growth%20at%20community%20colleges>

⁶ March 30, 2022. IFP “STEM Immigration Is Critical to American National Security”: <https://ifp.org/stem-immigration-is-critical-to-american-national-security/>

⁷ November 17, 2025. IIE: Institute of International Education “United States Hosts 1.2 Million International Students at Colleges and Universities, Totaling 6% of U.S. Higher Education”: <https://www.iie.org/news/open-doors-2025-press-release/>

⁸ November 2025 President Trump interview to Fox News, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/quick-takes/2025/11/12/trump-defends-enrolling-international-students>

ACPA-College Student Educators International
American Association of Colleges and Universities
American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine
American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers
American Association of State Colleges and Universities
American Association of University Professors
American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges
American Council of Learned Societies
American Council on Education
Association of American Law Schools
Association of American Universities
Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities
Association of Community College Trustees
Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges
Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
Association of Research Libraries
Career Education Colleges and Universities
COGR
Consortium of Universities of the Washington Metropolitan Area
Council for Advancement and Support of Education
Council of Graduate Schools
EDUCAUSE
ETS
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities
NAFSA: Association of International Educators
NASPA-Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education
National Association for College Admission Counseling
National Association of Colleges and Employers
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration
UPCEA - The Online and Professional Education Association