

IMMIGRATION POLICY FOCUS

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FOREIGN STUDENTS ON CAMPUS

An Asset to Our Nation

AMERICAN IMMIGRATION LAW FOUNDATION



White House photo by Tina Hager

King Abdullah of Jordan, once a foreign student in the U.S., meets with President Bush, 8/1/02.

“The relationships that are formed between individuals from different countries, as part of international programs and exchanges, can also foster goodwill that develops into vibrant, mutually beneficial partnerships among nations.”

*President Bush,
November 13, 2001*

FOREIGN STUDENTS ON CAMPUS

An Asset to Our Nation

Americans are rightfully proud of our nation's higher education system. Scholars come to the U.S. from all over the world and we have historically educated many of the world's leaders. But the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon have created new challenges that threaten our position as the premier higher education destination in the world. Concerns with safety and security have resulted in a host of policies, some of which are reasonable, but some of which may be harmful to the global exchange of ideas that has been the hallmark of our open international education programs. In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks, foreign students are having a much harder time coming to, and remaining in, the United States. The many new security measures imposed on us may not make us safer but will make it increasingly more difficult for students who wish to study in the U.S. and for the U.S. institutions who wish to educate them.

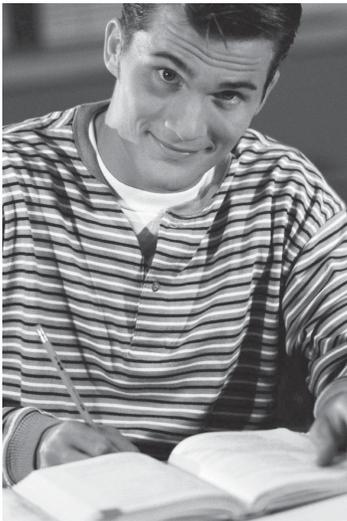
It would be a mistake to close the doors of our colleges and universities to foreign students. Foreign students provide links from our culture to other cultures. It is through them that many of our international trade partnerships are born. Foreign students who come to study here go back to their countries as unofficial "ambassadors" for America, as they share their experience in the U.S. with friends, family, and colleagues abroad.

Foreign students bring extra talent to the economy and can promote democracy and freedom once they return to their homelands. Many of the world's most prominent leaders were educated here, as well as Nobel Prize recipients, leaders in business and education, and world-class athletes. International education exchange programs bring in revenue to our colleges and universities, and fuel local, state, and national economies.

They also diversify our college campuses, creating a cultural learning environment for domestic students. The presence of foreign students on U.S. campuses may contribute to the fact that American students are increasingly interested in study abroad programs.

An international education opens eyes and broadens perspective in an increasingly interdependent world. Such a background is essential

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to fostering the global and cultural knowledge and understanding necessary for effective U.S. leadership, competitiveness, and security.

Current U.S. political leaders are very supportive of international education as being in the best interests of the nation. President Bush has stated, “We must affirm our commitment to promote educational opportunities that enable American students to study abroad and to encourage international students to take part in our educational system. By studying foreign cultures and languages and living abroad, we gain a better understanding of the many similarities that we share, to learn to respect our differences. The relationships that are formed between individuals from different countries, as part of international programs and exchanges, can also foster goodwill that develops into vibrant, mutually beneficial partnerships among nations.”¹

Secretary of State Colin Powell states that foreign students “enrich our communities with their academic abilities and cultural diversity, and they return home with an increased understanding and often a lasting affection for the United States. I can think of no more valuable asset to our country than the friendship of future world leaders who have been educated here.” Powell continues, “International education prepares our citizens to live, work, and compete in the global economy, and promotes tolerance and reduction of conflict.”²

Attorney General John Ashcroft, even while issuing strict new regulations which will affect foreign students and scholars in the United States, stated, “In making these reforms, we remain committed to welcoming and accommodating those who come to America to study in our universities. Allowing foreign students to study here is one of the ways we convey our love of freedom to foreign students who will one day return to their countries and take on leadership positions.”³

In an interview with the Institute of International Education, Doug Daft, Chairman and CEO of The Coca-Cola Company stated, “International education ignites a passion for understanding other people and their perspectives. That’s one important benefit to working or studying abroad-and it’s essential to success in our increasingly diverse world. Students with international exposure come to understand the value of dialogue between people of different cultures and between people with different points of view. They also gain an understanding of the importance of relationships. Relationships are the foundation for meaning and success in life. They are also the foundation for strong businesses, especially businesses that care about creating mutual benefit.”⁴

WORLD LEADERS EDUCATED IN THE U.S.

This country has reaped benefits from being able to attract the academic “cream of the crop” from all over the world and many of those who study here go on to become leaders in their own countries. Many of them bring American ideals to their countries, and some have become our greatest allies. It is estimated that 46 current and 165 former heads of government are products of American higher education. ⁵

U.N. Secretary General and 2001 Nobel Peace Prize recipient, Kofi Annan, studied in the United States. Annan is a native of Ghana who completed his undergraduate work in economics at Macalester College in St. Paul, MN. He returned in 1971 as a Sloan Fellow at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology where he received a Master of Science degree in management.

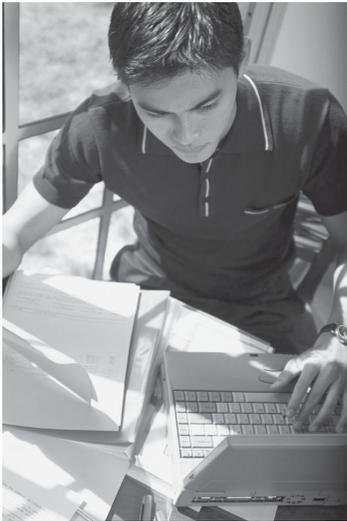
King Abdullah of Jordan has stated that he wants to further democratize Jordan’s institutions and foster political pluralism, while working for a just and comprehensive peace in a climate of openness and tolerance. Abdullah attended Eaglebrook School, and Deerfield Academy in the United States. In 1987, Abdullah attended the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., and was in residence as a Mid-Career Fellow. He undertook Advanced Study and Research in International Affairs under the auspices of the Master of Science in Foreign Service Program.

Abdullah was one of the first Arab leaders to visit President Bush after September 11th, and he has worked with the United States to combat terrorism. Jordan is a strong partner of the United States in combating terrorism and in the pursuit of regional peace.

Three of America’s strongest allies in the war on terrorism have had US education: interim Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai, Mexican President Vicente Fox, and British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

French President Jacques Chirac is a graduate of Harvard University. Former South African President F.W. DeKlerk, who played a critical role in ending apartheid, credits his exchange program in the U.S. with providing his first vision of a multi-racial society. Israel’s former Prime Minister Ehud Barak, who aggressively sought to solve the Israeli-Palestinian matter, also studied here.

Three of America’s strongest allies in the war on terrorism have studied in the U.S.: interim Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai, Mexican President Vicente Fox, and British Prime Minister Tony Blair.



The advance of democracy and economic growth in East Asia and Latin American coincides with the coming to power of a generation of national leaders whose formative years were spent as high school or university students in the United States. These include: from Argentina, President Paul Ricardo; from Bolivia, President Sanchez de Lozada Bustamante and Vice-President Jorge Quirgoa Ramirez; and from South Korea, Prime Minister Kang Young Hoon.

Other U.S.-educated world leaders include Nicaraguan Minister of Presidency Antonio Lacayo Oyanguren; Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong; former Philippines President Corazon Cojuangco Aquino; Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir bin Mohammed; former U.N. Secretary General Egyptian Boutros Boutros-Ghali; former Prime Minister of Canada Pierre Elliott Trudeau, and German Prime Minister Ernst Carl Julius Albrecht.

As foreign students in the U.S., each of these leaders learned first hand about the many benefits of democracy and the potential for economic, cultural, and political partnerships with the United States.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF FOREIGN STUDENTS

The U.S. has been the primary destination for international students and scholars for almost 50 years. The number of student visas issued by the State Department has steadily increased over the last three decades from 65,000 in 1971 to 315,000 in 2000. Last year, half a million foreign students were enrolled at American universities and colleges.⁶

Most educators believe that the gradual rise in the interest of international education is a sign that the world recognizes the U.S. as the leader in almost every field of study.

According to the Institute of International Education, about half came from Asia, most coming from China and India, and fewer than 7 percent came from the Middle East. Overall, students account for less than 2 percent of all nonimmigrant visitors.

Foreign students are a significant part of the academic life of higher education. Their impact is noticeable in different ways at different levels of study and in different disciplines. Data from the "Almanac Issue 2001-02" of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, in 1999, foreign students comprised 3.49% of all enrollment in higher education; 2.24% of undergraduate higher education, and 12.4% of graduate enrollment.

The same source data indicate that in the 1997-1998 academic year, foreign students represented 3.3% of all bachelor's degrees awarded; 12.15% of all master's degrees awarded; and 24.6% of all doctorates awarded. Among doctorates awarded in specific fields in 1999, foreign students were awarded 41.1% of doctorates in engineering; 33.9% in physical sciences; 26.2% in business, and 26% in life sciences.

During the 2000-2001 academic year, the top ten countries of origin for foreign-exchange students included: China, India, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Canada, Indonesia, and Mexico.

While enrolled in schools, some foreign students are also an important part of the workforce at their institutions, especially at large, research universities. They often accept teaching and research assistant positions. In this way, they provide assistance in the teaching of large undergraduate classes, they provide research assistance, and they make up a significant part of the workers in science laboratories.

Foreign students who choose to study in the United States help to build a bridge between America and their countries of origin and their contributions to our overall position in the world should not be underestimated. They increase our depth of understanding of global issues, they help us to build trade partners and gain access to new markets overseas. These students provide us with immense economic and political advantages in foreign relations. This powerful tool for building positive relationships has served the U.S. extremely well over the years.

LEADING COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

Rank	Place of Origin	2000/01	2001/02	2000/01 % Change	% of U.S. Foreign Student Total
1	India	54,664	66,836	22.3	11.5
2	China	59,939	63,211	5.5	10.8
3	Korea, Republic of	45,685	49,046	7.4	8.4
4	Japan	46,497	46,810	0.7	8.0
5	Taiwan	28,566	28,930	1.3	5.0
6	Canada	25,279	26,514	4.9	4.5
7	Mexico	10,670	12,518	17.3	2.1
8	Turkey	10,983	12,091	10.1	2.1
9	Indonesia	11,625	11,614	-0.1	2.0
10	Thailand	11,187	11,606	3.7	2.0

Source: Institute for International Education

LEADING INSTITUTIONS

Rank	Institution	City	State	Int'l Students	Total Enrollment
1	University of Southern California	Los Angeles	CA	5,950	29,813
2	New York University	New York	NY	5,504	37,134
3	Columbia University	New York	NY	5,116	22,425
4	Purdue University Main Campus	West Lafayette	IN	4,695	37,871
5	University of Texas at Austin	Austin	TX	4,673	50,616
6	Boston University	Boston	MA	4,412	27,767
7	The Ohio State University Main Campus	Columbus	OH	4,302	48,477
8	University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign	Champaign	IL	4,287	37,684
9	University of Michigan - Ann Arbor	Ann Arbor	MI	4,149	38,248
10	University of Florida	Gainesville	FL	3,884	45,937

Source: Institute for International Education

FOREIGN STUDENTS AND THE U.S. ECONOMY



Foreign students also have a positive impact on the economy. “We are attached by a thousand cords to the world at large, to its teeming cities, to its remotest regions, to its oldest civilizations, to its newest cries for freedom,” Secretary of State Colin Powell said. “This means that we have an interest in every place on this Earth, that we need to lead, to guide, to help in every country that has a desire to be free, open and prosperous.”

Exchange programs pay remarkable dividends to America by supporting our productive engagement with the world. Foreign students spent \$11 billion a year on tuition and living expenses, helping to make higher education America’s fifth-largest service export.⁷

The benefits greatly outweigh the costs when it comes to foreign students. Recent statistics from the Commerce Department show that foreign students are directly responsible for the creation of over 150,000 American jobs. As the world’s largest exporter of educational services, the U.S. maintains a \$6 billion trade surplus in this sector. In the academic application process, foreign students are required to demonstrate that they have adequate funds to pay for tuition, books and living expenses as a precondition for qualifying for the form necessary to apply for a student visa. Undergraduate foreign students have little access to financial aid. This means that they are bringing in new money to finance their education and to underwrite the costs of living in the US. This can be extremely important to the local communities they support.

For example, foreign students contributed about \$490 million to the Illinois state economy in FY2001. They contributed \$217 million in Washington D.C, \$1.3 billion in New York, and \$1.6 billion in California in the same fiscal year.

Some economists say that current estimates that future export trade will equal 30 percent of America’s gross domestic product mean that a large amount of economic growth must take place in emerging markets where the U.S. has little or no business experience.

To continue to prosper in an increasingly interdependent global economy, the United States will need more citizens knowledgeable about business practices around the world. Much of the future economic growth that will provide new opportunities for U.S. prosperity will take place in large, emerging markets that are less familiar to Americans, such as China, India, Poland, and Brazil. To compete successfully, we will need executives and entrepreneurs who understand these countries.

THE IMPACT OF SEPTEMBER 11TH

Since September 11th, the welcome America extends to foreigners wishing to come to campuses is becoming much more guarded. Foreign students are now subject to more restrictions and oversight.

One new policy delays the issuance of visas for certain Muslim men, pending a security review in Washington. Another policy requires that every nonimmigrant male between the ages of 16 and 45 complete a supplemental application when applying for a visa. That form has questions about possible terrorist-related activities.

“It asks us questions like whether or not we have any experience with biological weapons, and whether or not we’ve been a part of any armed conflict,” Joseph Roche, a graduate student from India studying at the University of Maryland Baltimore’s Department of Physical Therapy told the *Chicago Tribune*.⁸

It now takes an average of six to eight weeks to get a student visa approved. Before September 11th, it took an average of four to six weeks, according to the U.S. State Department. Kelly Shannon, a State Department spokeswoman, told the *Chicago Tribune* that the coordination of the federal departments working together was causing a longer processing time for applications.

“The screening outside the consulate is more intense,” said Roche, who applied for his student visa at the U.S. consulate in Madras, India. “We were frisked, then asked to sit in line and fill out a form on our work history.”

International students also have concerns about being prevented from getting a U.S. education if visa officers suspect they might want to stay after they graduate from college. The concern over “intending immigrants” is a long-standing policy of the State Department in the issuance of nonimmigrant visas.

“Usually when students have a good academic record they don’t have much of a problem,” Roche told the *Tribune*. “But I had a friend from India who had applied at the same time that I had—he was rejected even though he had good grades and standardized test scores. They just gave him a letter, where they stated that one of the reasons that he was denied a visa was because he was a potential immigrant.”

Diplomats say the increased scrutiny is generating frustration in the very countries where the U.S. is hoping to gain support for the war on terrorism.



These policies do not merely cause inconvenience; they are likely to reduce the number of foreign students in this country. American diplomats say the policy is generating frustration in the very countries where the U.S. is hoping to gain support because people feel they are being singled out and fear they will be unfairly treated in this country. American officials say that they cannot tell an applicant how long it will take for word from Washington. Lengthy delays are likely to result in fewer applicants seeking to study in the U.S. and to provide the impetus to seek education in another English-speaking country, e.g. Canada, the U.K., Australia, or New Zealand.

In Singapore, it took a call from a cabinet minister to the American Ambassador, Franklin L. Lavin, to get a visa for someone who had a scholarship to Stanford.⁹

“It’s been 22 years since I did consular work,” Lavin told the *New York Times*, laughing. But he added more seriously, “Don’t we want to encourage more of these guys to get degrees in the U.S.?”

Singapore is not on the list of countries that automatically attract scrutiny, but many Singaporean residents were born in one of the suspect countries, or have an immediate relative who was, and that makes them subject to the policy. Several hundred students from Singapore are waiting for their visas in order to start school in the United States, according to Lavin.

In Malaysia, also, several hundred students who have been admitted to American universities, usually with Malaysian government scholarships, have been unable to get to the United States for classes.

Kip Thorne, a physicist at the California Institute of Technology, who is part of a wide effort to prove Einstein’s general theory of relativity, has been waiting since July for his Russian colleague, Vladimir Braginsky to get a visa to work on a billion dollar taxpayer financed project involving 13 countries.

It is not only the foreign students who lose because of these new restrictions. Many universities and small liberal arts colleges lose valuable tuition money for positions that were held for foreign students because foreign students they expected to return could not obtain visas. American students are also missing out on the opportunity to learn from students from other countries that come here every year.

NEW TRACKING SYSTEM

The INS has announced that it will implement a new system known as the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). It is an internet-based system that collects current information on nonimmigrant students and exchange visitors. The hope is that this system will allow the federal agencies to keep better tabs on international students.

Recalling that foreign students comprise approximately 2 percent of the estimated 30 million temporary visa holders in the United States, a representative from NAFSA: Association of International Educators observed, “ [With SEVIS,] we will know everything there is to know about two percent of the population of concern and nothing about the other 98 percent.”

Due to confusion about the technology, as of late Fall 2002, only 736 of about 7,500 schools authorized to accept foreign students have been certified to use this system. Schools, however, will have to be certified by January 30, 2003 if they wish to continue accepting foreign students. The deadline is firm, though some schools complain they lack the software to handle the system.

The question now is whether foreign students will remain enthusiastic about studying in the U.S., now that the opportunity comes with so much extra baggage. The answer is not clear, but some educators are prepared for the worst.

The “improved” tracking system will only provide information on 2% of all visitors to the United States

CONCLUSION

Foreign students in the United States provide several benefits. When they return to their home nations, they have a deep understanding of our culture, taking with them experience with and an appreciation of democratic values, a pluralistic society, a free society, and a vibrant capitalist economy. When American political and business leaders encounter their foreign counterparts, frequently they are talking to someone who knows what the United States is and how it works.

International educational exchange is the fifth leading service export for the United States contributing almost \$11 billion to the



nation, the states, and local communities where foreign students spend their tuition, room and board, and other educational outlays. Foreign students provide opportunities for domestic students to learn more about the world, not from a textbook, the evening news, or a globe, but from a person who brings unique experiences to enliven the stale facts and figures and inaccurate stereotypes about people from other lands.

Foreign students provide many opportunities for classroom and laboratory academic exchanges. They provide insights and perspectives that stay here when they leave.

The horrors of September 11th have produced reactions that may be detrimental to international educational exchange. There are more restrictions and caution in the issuance of student visas at U.S. Embassies and Consulates abroad. There are more restrictive regulations placed on the personal and academic lives of foreign students. An extensive electronic tracking system is about to be implemented which will provide volumes of data on a population that represents only 2 percent of the 30,000,000 annual foreign visitors to the United States.

Over several years, and prior to September 11th, the United States has lost a large share of the foreign student market to other English-speaking countries such as the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. These countries, unlike the United States, have aggressive, government-supported recruitment activities to attract foreign students.

In the current environment, it seems likely that the United States will lose some of its appeal to foreign students. Difficulties in getting student visas, involved bureaucratic requirements and procedures, and the lure of useful alternatives may, indeed, have a negative effect on the United States status as the primary destination for foreign students.

Yet international educational exchange programs can continue to help the United States maintain its leadership position in the world. It is crucial, especially in light of September 11th, that these programs be maintained and strengthened and that a United States education and living experience remain accessible to talented students around the world.

The American Immigration Law Foundation thanks Emily Severson and Geoffrey R. Wood for their contributions to this report.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Bush, George W., International Education Week 2001 Message, November 13, 2001, Washington, DC. See exchanges.state.gov/iew2001/message.htm
- ² Powell, Colin, Statement on International Education Week, August 7, 2001, Washington, DC. See www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2001/4462.htm
- ³ Press Release “Justice Department Proposes Rule Governing Foreign Student Reporting,” May 10, 2002. See www.usdoj.gov/opa/pr/2002/May/02_ag_281.htm
- ⁴ Daft, Douglas, “Interview with IIE Networker,” Institute for International Education. See www.usc.edu/dept/education/globaled/now/fullstatementdaft.html#13
- ⁵ For a comprehensive list of past former foreign students, see exchanges.state.gov/education/educationusa/leaders.htm. See also www.usastudyguide.com/famousstudents.htm.
- ⁶ The leading source of demographic data about foreign students on campus is collected annually by the Institute for International Education. See www.opendoors.iienetwork.org
- ⁷ Economic impact data is collected by NAFSA: Association of International Educators. See www.nafsa.org/content/PublicPolicy/DataonInternationalEducation/econBenefits.htm
- ⁸ Owens, John, “Foreign Students Facing Post 9/11 Rules,” *Chicago Tribune*, October 6, 2002
- ⁹ Marquis, Christopher, “Slowdown of U.S. Visas Stalls Business, Science, and Personal Travel Plans,” *New York Times*, October 15, 2002

IMMIGRATION FACTS



AMONG THE FACTS INSIDE THIS ISSUE OF IMMIGRATION POLICY FOCUS:

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Photo Credit: Photodisc Images

“I can think of no more valuable asset to our country than the friendship of future world leaders who have been educated here”

—*U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell,
August 7, 2001*

ABOUT THE FOUNDATION...

The American Immigration Law Foundation is a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization dedicated to increasing public understanding of immigration law and policy and the value of immigration to American society; to promoting public service and excellence in the practice of immigration law; and to advancing fundamental fairness and due process under the law for immigrants.



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