

## ***AN OPEN LETTER TO THE WHITE HOUSE, DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY AND DEPARTMENT OF STATE***

July 8, 2020

On behalf of the educational and scientific societies listed below, representing STEM professionals in all fields, both in the US and internationally, ***we respectfully request that plans announced by US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) on July 6, 2020 to modify the exemption to the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) be withdrawn immediately.*** The proposed modifications would prohibit non-immigrant students from remaining in the United States if all classes are online as a result of COVID-19. Implementation of the ICE SEVP modifications could severely impact the nearly 1.6 million students currently in the US under SEVP by causing vast numbers of students to potentially be deported.

Coupled with recent Executive Orders and Presidential Proclamations, we are gravely concerned that this latest proposed ICE action will not only cost the US the current cohort of future innovators now enrolled in US schools, but could permanently destroy one of America's main competitive advantages: our ability to attract the world's best and brightest to study here, work here, and ultimately create America's industries and jobs of the future. Particularly in this time of almost unprecedented economic challenges, deporting students is an experiment the nation simply cannot afford to conduct.

In late 2018, Forbes Magazine published the dramatic research findings of a study by the non-partisan National Foundation for American Policy<sup>1</sup>:

America's ability to attract international students fosters entrepreneurship. About 23% (21 of 91) of the billion-dollar startup companies had a founder who first came to America as an international student. . . . The research finds that among these privately held billion-dollar startup companies, immigrant founders have created an average of more than 1,200 jobs per company.

Leadership in global scientific and technological research requires the talents, skills, and ideas of STEM professionals from different backgrounds and cultures, and with different experiences and perspectives. Indeed, the US became the world leader in many areas of science and technology during the last century in part because of the diversity of individuals who contributed to those disciplines. Such diversity continues to drive the US economy today and will assure our global competitiveness tomorrow.

International students comprise a majority of doctoral candidates in many STEM fields. Not only do these students contribute to America's research enterprise but, given their prevalence in

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://nfap.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/2018-BILLION-DOLLAR-STARTUPS.NFAP-Policy-Brief.2018-1.pdf>

graduate programs, international students are critical to supporting efforts to nurture and develop the talents of thousands of American students.

In order for the US to continue to be a STEM leader, however, we must maintain a robust visa program open to all nations. We call upon ICE to reconsider the unintended impact of crippling this program and, with it, the high-powered, education-driven engine of America's unparalleled innovation economy.

America's economy and prosperity have been and remain inextricably tied to our hospitality and diversity. Now, more than ever, is the time to honor, embrace, and extend that legacy by assuring that all those now studying here may continue to do so under the SEVP for both their benefit and our nation's.

Respectfully submitted,

American Anthropological Association  
American Association for Anatomy  
American Association for Dental Research  
American Association for the Advancement of Science  
American Association of Geographers  
American Association of Immunologists  
American Association of Physicists in Medicine  
American Association of Physics Teachers  
American Astronomical Society  
American Chemical Society  
American Geophysical Union  
American Institute for Medical and Biological Engineering  
American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics  
American Institute of Biological Sciences  
American Mathematical Society  
American Meteorological Society  
American Oil Chemists' Society  
American Physical Society  
American Physiological Society  
American Psychological Association  
American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology  
American Society for Cell Biology  
American Society for Gravitational and Space Research  
American Society for Investigative Pathology  
American Society for Microbiology  
American Society for Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics  
American Society of Agronomy  
American Society of Civil Engineers  
American Society of Human Genetics  
American Society of Landscape Architects  
American Society of Plant Biologists  
American Statistical Association  
American Thoracic Society

AnitaB.org  
Association for Psychological Science  
Association for Women in Mathematics  
Association for Women in Science  
Association of Population Centers  
Association of Science and Technology Centers  
Biomedical Engineering Society  
Biophysical Society  
Coalition for the Life Sciences  
Computing Research Association  
Conference Board of the Mathematical Sciences  
Council on Undergraduate Research  
Ecological Society of America  
Entomological Society of America  
Federation of American Scientists  
Geological Society of America  
Institute of Food Technologists  
Institute of Mathematical Statistics  
Institute of Transportation Engineers  
International Society for Magnetic Resonance in Medicine  
International Society for Stem Cell Research  
Mathematical Association of America  
National Council of Teachers of Mathematics  
National Council of Teachers of Mathematics  
OSA-The Optical Society  
Population Association of America  
Research!America  
Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics  
Society for Neuroscience  
Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers  
SPIE, the International Society for Optics and Photonics  
STEM Education Coalition  
The Minerals, Metals & Materials Society

*Updated July 9, 2020*