

# International Students and Scholars: the Policy Arena

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# How Many?

- 586,300 international students studied in the U.S. in AY 02-03
- Record total number
- BUT only a 1% increase over AY 01-02
- AY 00-01 and 01-02 had shown 6% increases.

# Sending Locations

- **Where are the students from?**

Asia (51%), Europe (13%), Latin America (12%), Africa (7%), the Middle East (6%), North America and Oceania (5%)

- **Which are the leading countries of origin?**

India (74,603), China (64,757), Korea (51,519), Japan (45,960), and Taiwan (28,017).

# U.S. Host Institutions

- **Leading host institutions**

University of Southern California

New York University

Columbia University

Purdue University

University of Texas at Austin

University of Michigan

- In AY 02-03, 153 U.S. colleges and universities hosted 1,000 or more international students, and 29 of these hosted more than 3,000 international students each.

# Successes

- Priority given to students and scholars for visa interviews.
- Technology Alert List (TAL) somewhat curbed after an initial expansion of the list after 9/11.
- Extension of Visa Mantis clearance to one year for all students and scholars on F and J visas.
- Informal visa application checking process has been established between the National Academies, State, and the FBI.
- Creation of a "tiger team" designed to address discrepancies between SEVIS records at ports of entry and school records last fall.



# Problems Remaining

- Lengthy delays
  - Repetitive security checks
  - Visa renewal
- Inconsistent treatment of visa applications
- Lack of transparent tracking system
- Reciprocity agreements
- SEVIS fee collection

# Organizations Involved

- Higher Ed Assns (AAU, NASULGC, ACE, CGS, AACC, NAICU)
- NAFSA: International Student Educators
- AAAS
- National Academy of Sciences
  - Continues to track visa delays
  - <http://www7.nationalacademies.org/visas/>
- Scientific societies
- Business community

# Coalitions and Groups

- AAAS-AAU coalition
  - Focusing on student and scholar issues
    - AAAS
    - Higher Ed Associations (AAU, NASULGC, ACE)
    - Scientific societies
- Compete America
  - Focusing on temporary worker (H-1B) issues
    - Mostly business representatives
    - Higher education represented



# AAAS-AAU Coalition

- Consists of higher education and scientific societies representatives
- Formed to examine homeland security issues and find areas of agreement
- First area of focus was visa policy
- Sign-on deadline will be May 12

# AAAS-AAU Coalition (cont.)

- Will make a set of community recommendations
- Draft reviewed by number of campuses and scientific societies
- Will be used as a set of common goals in conversations with DHS, State, OSTP, and others

# Recommendation 1

Extend the validity of Visas Mantis security clearances for international students, scholars and scientists from the current one-year time period to the duration of their course of study or academic appointment.

# Recommendation 2

Establish a timely process by which exchange visitors holding F and J visas can revalidate their visas, or at least begin the visa renewal process, before they leave the United States to attend academic and scientific conferences, visit family, or attend to personal business.

# Recommendation 3

Create a mechanism by which visa applicants and their sponsors may inquire about the status of pending visa applications, and establish a process by which applications pending for more than 30 days are given priority processing.



# Recommendation 4

Provide updated training of consular staff, establish clear protocols for initiating a Visas Mantis review, and assure that screening tools are being used in the most appropriate manner.

# Recommendation 5

Revise and extend visa reciprocity agreements with key sending countries like China and Russia in order to reduce the number of times that visiting international students, scholars, and scientists must renew their visas.

# Recommendation 6

Implement a fee collection system for the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) that allows for a variety of simple fee payment methods that are quick, safe, and secure, including payment after the individual arrives in the United States.

# Next Steps

- AAAS-AAU Coalition
  - Finalize recommendations (May 5)
  - Seek organization sign-ons (May 12)
  - Use as advocacy document during continued discussions with State, DHS, and OSTP (May-June)
  - Encourage press coverage as a means of drawing public attention to the issue

# Next Steps (cont.)

- Department of Homeland Security
  - Sec. Ridge wants to have a university package of “fixes” ready in the next two months
- Combined higher ed – State - DHS public relations campaign to address the perception problem overseas (summer)



# Other Issues

- SEVIS Fee Collection
  - Rule expected early this summer.
  - In the meeting with Secretary Ridge meeting, presidents raised the possibility of universities collecting the fee.

# Other Issues (cont.)

- Science Visa Category
  - Under discussion by OSTP, DHS, and State
  - Would create a new visa category
  - Intended for repeat visitors that come over to work in scientific labs (i.e. physicists)
  - Could draw more attention to other university visa categories