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February 28, 2022

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of State
Room 7226
Harry S. Truman Building
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Nebraska Avenue Complex
3801 Nebraska Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20395

Dear Secretary Blinken and Secretary Mayorkas:

On behalf of the undersigned higher education associations, we write to ask that the U.S. Department of State and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) provide as much flexibility and support as possible for Ukrainian students and scholars currently in the United States, and for students and scholars seeking to leave Ukraine during the current crisis.

As your agencies make plans to support Ukrainians in the midst of the Russian invasion of their country, we ask that Ukrainian students in the United States on F-1 or J-1 visas, as well as those completing F-1 Optional Practical Training (OPT) or J-1 Academic Training, be offered flexibility regarding their current visas. Some of these students and scholars may be close to the end of their program of study, research, or training, and may not be able to immediately return to their home country during a war. In addition, some students and scholars may have seen their financial situation suddenly change, and we ask for accommodations for those who must work while they undertake their studies in the United States.

According to the 2021 Open Doors report, there are 1,739 students from Ukraine studying at U.S. colleges and universities, including 877 undergraduates and 529 graduate students.¹ In addition, the U.S. Fulbright program supports students within the Ukraine and in the United States. We appreciate that the State Department has recently stated that the U.S. government will continue to monitor the situations and assist Fulbright-supported Ukrainian students.²

President Biden has designated the DHS as the lead federal agency to coordinate Ukraine-related domestic preparedness and response. Our colleges and universities and the U.S. higher education community at large stand ready to be a resource for displaced international students and scholars, just as we always have during the pandemic and previous political upheavals and military conflicts across the globe.

¹ <https://opendoorsdata.org/data/international-students/all-places-of-origin/>

² <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2022/02/25/russias-invasion-ukraine-felt-academe>

We look forward to working with you to ensure that Ukrainian students and scholars are allowed to continue their studies and research in the United States and are offered other support that they may need.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ted Mitchell". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Ted Mitchell, President

Cc: David Plack, Senior Policy Adviser, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs,
Department of State
Traci Silas, Acting Executive Director, Office of Academic Engagement and
Campaigns, DHS

On behalf of:

American Association of Community Colleges
American Association of State Colleges and Universities
American Council on Education
Association of American Universities
Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities
Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
CCCU - Council for Christian Colleges & Universities
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities
NAFSA: Association of International Educators
National Association for College Admission Counseling
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
Thurgood Marshall College Fund
UNCF