



August 12, 2020

The Honorable Carl Risch
Assistant Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
Bureau of Consular Affairs
600 19th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036

The Honorable Mark Morgan
Senior Official Performing the Duties of the
Commissioner
Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Customs and Border Protection
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20229

Dear Assistant Secretary Risch and Acting Commissioner Morgan:

We write you today on behalf of our respective higher education associations to ensure there is awareness regarding the guidance issued by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) for new and returning international students with valid visas seeking entry to the U.S. this fall. As our member universities and colleges seek to safely bring students back to campuses this fall, we urge the Departments of Homeland Security (DHS) and State to work together to safeguard the ability of new international students enrolled in hybrid academic programs at U.S. institutions to have their visas processed and enter the country, as outlined in the combined July 15 and July 24 ICE FAQ document.¹ Given the great uncertainty facing our international students and our institutions this fall, it is important to make sure that existing and initial students can safely travel with certainty to begin the academic term.

We have received troublesome reports of students being denied entry while traveling on valid visas for a hybrid program. We are also concerned, as U.S. consulates resume routine visa services, that students participating in hybrid programs are experiencing denials or delays for visa processing. In some instances, universities are including additional information on an international student's Form I-20 to indicate a hybrid instructional model. Other institutions have provided supplementary information to students to indicate the instruction model and planned coursework.

In a rapidly evolving guidance environment, our member institutions want to provide clear information to facilitate visa processing and entry. If further guidance is needed about the type of documentation students should bring to a visa interview or for entry into the U.S. to demonstrate the nature of their academic programs, we ask that DHS and State quickly share that with us so that colleges and universities can best advise students undertaking difficult travel during the global pandemic.

We would be happy to act as a resource to you and to communicate about any issues that occur with safely bringing international students to the U.S. this fall. We look forward to working with you on these important matters.

Sincerely,

¹ <https://www.ice.gov/doclib/coronavirus/covid19faq.pdf>



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Cc: Ed Ramotowski, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs
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