

November 13, 2018

The Honorable Kirstjen M. Nielsen
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Nebraska Ave. Center, NW
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Nielsen:

I write to commend the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for reestablishing the Homeland Security Academic Advisory Council (HSAAC) earlier this year. Since its establishment in 2012, HSAAC has served as an important forum for discussion of homeland security and immigration issues between leaders of the higher education community and DHS. HSAAC meetings have addressed an array of issues including international students, campus emergency preparedness, homeland security-related academic programs and research, faculty exchanges, and the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP). We believe the ongoing opportunity for dialogue and engagement between DHS and the higher education community about pressing issues of common concern is of enormous value.

We are mindful of recent heightened security concerns regarding international students, including the views expressed by members of Congress on both sides of the aisle and the testimony of witnesses at Congressional hearings earlier this year. While we strongly believe that international students and scholars contribute much to our country, we are anxious to do our part to ensure that America's security is protected. Accordingly, a number of higher education associations and senior leaders of colleges and universities have been engaged with Congress and the national security and science agencies including the FBI, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, the Departments of Defense and State, the National Institutes of Health, and the National Science Foundation in a dialogue about national security issues and higher education.

I want to raise two specific issues regarding the reestablishment of HSAAC. As you may know, because of retirements, several leading higher education associations, including ACE, are no longer listed as members. I urge you to renew those memberships. ACE represents nearly 1,700 colleges and universities, two-year and four-year, public and private. We represent every sector of higher education and can be valuable in representing the concerns of our institutions and sharing information with the larger community. In addition, we encourage you to include the Association of American Universities (AAU) and the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) in HSAAC as they represent the major public and private research universities.

Secondly, given the importance of several recently proposed and in some cases implemented visa-related policies that directly impact higher education, we believe

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HSAAC should be convened before the end of 2018. This includes new rules regarding the accrual of unlawful presence, enhanced vetting of visa applications, and increases of student visa fees. In addition, the fall 2018 Unified Agenda regulatory plan indicates that DHS intends to issue proposed regulations on a number of areas of concern to higher education including establishing a maximum period of authorized stay for F-1 visas and changes to the H-1B nonimmigrant program. We hope HSAAC can provide a timely forum for us to engage in a dialogue with DHS on these issues.

For all the reasons stated above, we believe that the time is ripe for a meeting of the HSAAC to provide an opportunity for DHS and the higher education community to engage in a meaningful dialogue on the array of issues of common concern, and we look forward to working with you as you reestablish this important committee.

Sincerely,



Ted Mitchell
President

Cc: Michael Dougherty, Assistant Secretary for Border, Immigration, and Trade Policy
Trent Frazier, Executive Director for Academic Engagement