

# SEVP Spotlight

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## SEVP at NAFSA Annual Conference and Expo

### DIRECTOR'S CORNER



A message from  
Louis M. Farrell,  
director of ICE's  
Student and Exchange  
Visitor Program

Representatives from the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) attended the "NAFSA: Association of International Educators" Annual Conference and Expo in Saint Louis, Mo., with representatives from our partner agencies, in May 2013. Additionally, some SEVP subject matter experts attended via video conference to answer questions for the panels.

While at the NAFSA national conference, we participated in three panel sessions:

- **SEVIS Hot Topics: Current SEVIS I and SEVIS II Issues** – This session focused on U.S. government and international office perspectives on current Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) issues and modernization readiness issues. Because SEVIS issues can involve multiple government agencies, representatives from SEVP, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services and the U.S. Department of State spoke at this session.
- **Hot Topics in SEVIS and Visas for Intensive English Programs** – Representatives from SEVP and the U.S.



Department of State's Consular Affairs Office provided updates during this session. Representatives responded to questions on topics like implementation of accreditation requirements, visas for short term programs, recertification and requirements for the Form I-17, "Petition for Approval of School for Attendance by Nonimmigrant Student."

- **Discussions with SEVP about F and M Student Issues** – NAFSA leaders and SEVP officials discussed regulatory issues surrounding advising F and M students and best practices for managing issues.

We are grateful for the opportunity to connect with stakeholders, both in person and virtually,

at the NAFSA national conference. Many of the questions presented at the conference covered important topics that affect numerous stakeholders. Therefore, to share this information with a larger audience, many of these topics will be addressed on *Study in the States*.

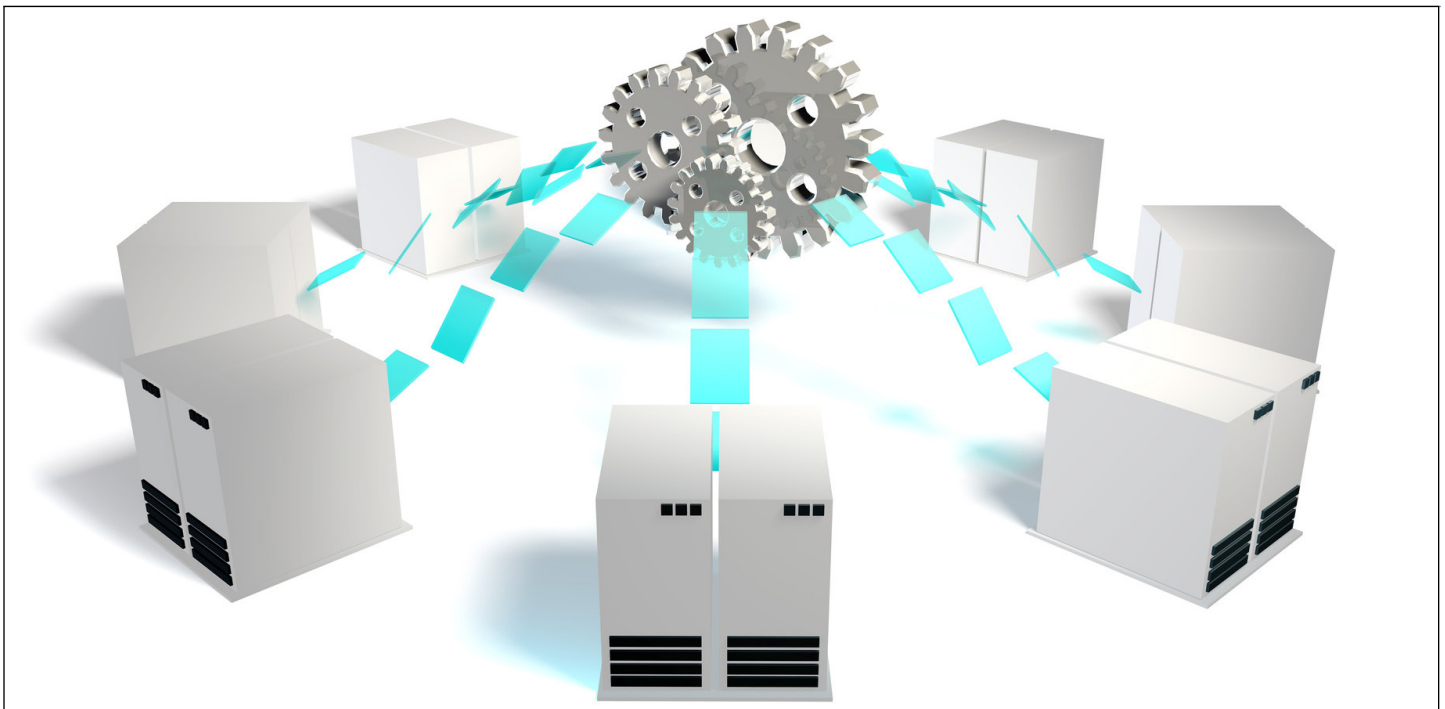
On behalf of SEVP, I want to thank all of you, our stakeholders, for your continued partnership. Your hard work and support is critical to our mission and is much appreciated.

Take Care,  
Lou



U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement

# Data Quality and Reliability are Vital for all SEVIS Stakeholders



The Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) is a web-based system developed to provide real-time, up-to-date information on F, M and J nonimmigrants to authorized users. As the global community evolved and became more complex, it was no longer practical for stakeholders to rely on each F, M and J nonimmigrant to carry paper documentation at all times. This evolution resulted in the development of SEVIS. SEVIS facilitates information sharing between students, schools and the federal government and relies on accurate and complete data to function properly.

A designated school official (DSO) has legal responsibilities to enter student data into SEVIS. Data integrity is critically important. With this responsibility, a DSO serves as the key link between the student, the participating schools and all SEVIS users.

In addition to the DSO, who else uses SEVIS?

- U.S. Department of State issues visas to individuals who want to enter the United States as F, M or J nonimmigrants. Mistakes in SEVIS could cause delays or even refusal during the visa issuance process;
- U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officials rely on the accuracy of SEVIS records when determining whether to admit a student upon arrival in the United States. Mistakes in a SEVIS record may delay a student's admission to the United States or cause CBP to refuse admission and send the student back to the native country;
- U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services processes and adjudicates all nonimmigrant benefit applications, such as changes of status, reinstatements and employment authorization, using SEVIS information. An error in SEVIS could prevent a qualified student from receiving a benefit; and,

- U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is responsible for enforcement and relies on the accuracy of SEVIS records to determine if a student has violated the conditions of a student visa. ICE could detain or remove a student if SEVIS does not accurately provide an up-to-date record of status or transfer among schools.

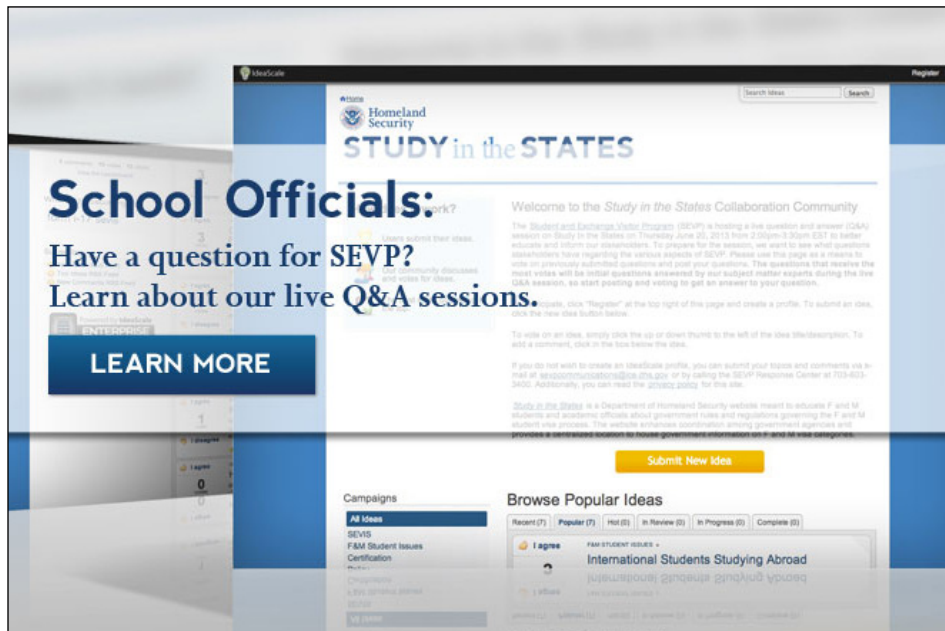
Many government agencies rely on SEVIS data, so it is essential that DSOs ensure compliance with SEVIS reporting requirements and maintain accurate, timely and complete records for all students in their jurisdiction. By doing so, a DSO may be able to alert F and M students about issues that could negatively impact their status in the United States and help prevent them from falling out of status. Staying familiar with any regulatory or administrative changes in SEVIS, typically announced via SEVIS broadcast messages, also will help DSOs avoid errors in completing reporting requirements.

## INTERNAL UPDATE

### SEVP Internal Name Changes

Recently, the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) renamed one unit and one section. The former Information Technology Management Unit is now the Systems Management Unit. The former Mission Support Section is now the Fee Management Section. These changes better reflect and define the daily operations of both groups. Although these are internal changes, SEVP wants to highlight this change so stakeholders are aware of the new names.

# New Resources on *Study in the States*



The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) manages [Study in the States](#), a website that provides timely information to stakeholders from all government agencies involved in the F and M student process. SEVP would like to introduce the following resources to stakeholders.

## Form I-17 Tutorial

SEVP understands the confusion school officials encounter when applying for certification to enroll F and M students in their academic programs. To apply, school officials must submit the Form I-17, “Petition for Approval of School for Attendance by Nonimmigrant Student.” To make the application process clearer for school officials, SEVP is developing a Form I-17 tutorial and fact sheet. The tutorial is a step-by-step guide that explains exactly what information we need in each field on the form. The fact sheet provides more information on what is required for each school type. Upon completion, these materials will be available on [Study in the States](#).

## Live Question and Answer Session

SEVP used Adobe Connect to host its first live question and answer webinar June 20, 2013. The webinar provided stakeholders another avenue to receive real-time answers from SEVP subject matter experts. Before the question

and answer session, SEVP collected questions from stakeholders via IdeaScale, a social media platform, which allows users to submit new questions and vote on previously submitted questions. The questions with the most votes – as determined by the voting response level from stakeholders – were addressed by SEVP subject matter experts during the live question and answer session. Additionally, SEVP took live questions via Twitter and the built-in question feature via Adobe Connect.

A recap of the first live question and answer session is available on [Study in the States](#). Stay tuned to [Study in the States](#) and respective social media accounts on [Twitter \(@StudyinStates\)](#) and [Facebook](#) for information on future sessions.

## Guidance

SEVP recently released draft guidance on conditional admission and bridge programs for stakeholder feedback. Initially, this guidance was available for two weeks. However, due to numerous responses and the importance of the subject, SEVP extended the feedback period by an additional week. Where applicable, SEVP is incorporating the feedback into the guidance and are appreciative of the candid responses from stakeholders.

## SEVIS UPDATE

# New SEVIS Functionalities

In 2006, the Homeland Security Council Policy Coordinating Committee identified several national security vulnerabilities related to the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). Based on the committee’s report, as well as through subsequent interactions with various government and public stakeholders, the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) developed a plan to address several vulnerabilities through improved functionalities in SEVIS. This plan includes taking advantage of new technologies and software development to improve SEVIS functionality over time.

In addition to supporting regular operations and maintenance of SEVIS, SEVP has been granted spending approval to enhance SEVIS with new functionalities that will do all of the following:

- Improve system performance so users do not continue to experience drastic fluctuations in system responsiveness;
- Standardize information such as names, character sets and dates to facilitate enhanced search and reporting functionality;
- Enhance data consistency with better ways to identify and correct erroneous data and validate United States addresses;
- Provide better search and reporting capabilities within the constraints imposed by the existing architecture of SEVIS; and,
- Provide more detailed information on accreditations and Federal Aviation Administration certifications by providing enough space to fully name the accreditations and certifications.

SEVP’s next step in the SEVIS modernization efforts is to identify a contractor to develop these new system enhancements.

## A Note from the Department of State

The “[Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act](#)” was enacted August 10, 2012. According to Section 501, Iranian citizens are ineligible for U.S. visas if they are seeking to enter the U.S. to participate in coursework at an [institution of higher education](#) for a career in Iran’s:

- Petroleum sector;
- Natural gas sector;
- Nuclear energy sector; or,
- Nuclear science field; or,
- Nuclear engineering field.

Examples of fields of study that render a visa applicant ineligible include:

- Petroleum engineering;
- Petroleum management;
- Nuclear science;
- Nuclear engineering; or,
- A related field.

Individuals seeking to study in other fields, such as business, management or computer science, but who intend to use these skills in Iran’s oil, natural gas or nuclear energy sectors, are also ineligible for visas. Consular officers will review each visa application submitted on or after August 10, 2012, to determine if the applicant is ineligible for a visa under this provision. For additional information on U.S. visas, please visit [Travel.State.Gov](#).

## FORM I-94 UPDATE

# Customs and Border Protection Form I-94 Automation

The new Form I-94, “Arrival/Departure Record,” automated process took effect April 30, 2013, after the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) published an [interim final rule](#) enabling the automation of the Form I-94 process March 27, 2013. CBP successfully deployed the new Form I-94 automation process at all air and sea ports May 21, 2013.

The new process streamlines the admission of individuals lawfully visiting the United States. The Form I-94 is a U.S. Department of Homeland Security document generally issued to nonimmigrant aliens at the time of lawful entry into the United States. The Form I-94 is evidence of a nonimmigrant’s term of admission and used to document legal status in the United States, including length of stay and departure dates.

With the new automated process, CBP officers will create a digital Form I-94 record for nonimmigrants entering the United States at an air or sea port with information already available in various law enforcement databases. CBP will only issue a paper-based Form I-94 to an air or sea traveler in limited circumstances. However, CBP officers at land borders will issue the paper-based Form I-94.

The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) has been providing communication and outreach support for this major process change, including the following:

- Updating information on [ice.gov/sevis](#);
- Developing blog posts and updating

information and instructions on *Study in the States*;

- Distributing a broadcast message to the designated school official (DSO) stakeholder audience; and,
- Internally communicating the impacts of this change to all SEVP staff so they can address stakeholder questions and concerns.

SEVP also held an informational Form I-94 automation webinar specifically for the DSO stakeholder community on April 9, 2013. During the webinar, subject matter experts from CBP provided an overview of the new process and how the changes would affect DSOs. CBP subject matter experts also highlighted information that DSOs could use to help successfully transition their current F and M students. A thorough question and answer session followed the presentation. This webinar is available for viewing on the [Study in the States webinar page](#).

For more information regarding the Form I-94 automation process, please review the list of resources below:

- Stakeholder webinar, [Form I-94 Automation](#)
- [CBP’s Travel website](#);
- CBP I-94 Automation [News Release](#);
- U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Alert, [CBP Announces Automation of Form I-94 Arrival/Departure Record](#); and,
- [Form I-94 website](#).

## Contact Us

### SEVP Contacts

The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) is dedicated to maintaining open communication with international students and academic officials in an effort to provide necessary support while studying in the United States. SEVP has multiple contact options:

Our offices are open Monday through Friday, 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time, except holidays

**Phone:** 703-603-3400

**E-mail:** [SEVP@ice.dhs.gov](mailto:SEVP@ice.dhs.gov)

**Find us on the Web:**

[www.ice.gov/sevis](http://www.ice.gov/sevis)

<http://studyinthestates.dhs.gov>

**Follow us on Twitter** @StudyinStates

**Like** *Study in the States* on Facebook

If you need assistance with passwords or Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) technical help, call the SEVIS Help Desk at 800-892-4829 between 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time or e-mail [SEVIShelpdesk@hp.com](mailto:SEVIShelpdesk@hp.com)

### ICE Contacts

To report national vulnerabilities or national security concerns:

Contact ICE’s **Counterterrorism and Criminal Exploitation Unit** at [CTCEU@dhs.gov](mailto:CTCEU@dhs.gov)

To report exploitation of student visa programs:

Contact your local **HSI Special Agent** or call 1-866-DHS-2ICE (1-866-347-2423) or visit [www.ice.gov](http://www.ice.gov)

*Disclaimer: The information presented in the SEVP Spotlight is provided for informational purposes only and should not be considered legal advice.*