

# SEVP Spotlight

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## DIRECTOR'S CORNER

### SEVIS Update



*A message from Louis M. Farrell, Director of the Student and Exchange Visitor Program*

Last month, I attended an Executive Steering Committee meeting, attended by senior leadership from the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Office of the Chief Information Officer and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. This is the council that oversees departmental or agency database systems, such as the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS).

During this meeting, it was announced that, for the first time, the SEVIS modernization initiative is "green" in all five areas that define the health of an information technology system. With this good news, it is the first time in eight years that SEVIS has been removed from the DHS "Watch List." This is a significant accomplishment. I attribute this dramatic improvement to four factors:

1. Hiring two strong leaders in Charlene Mattson (Chief of the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) Systems Management Unit) and Paula Wagner (SEVP Systems Program Manager);
2. Establishing credibility with DHS leadership by showing that SEVP has a solid way ahead and has the resources and expertise to deliver on that plan moving forward;

3. Adding significant personnel with the skill sets needed to support the SEVIS modernization effort; and
4. The tremendously important input provided to us these past two years by wonderful and knowledgeable members of the academic community.

With this good news, it is an ideal opportunity to share with you future SEVIS enhancements.

April enhancements include a new SEVIS employment information page for F and M international student records. This page allows school officials and government users to see all of a student's employment authorizations associated with a SEVIS ID.

The much-discussed SEVIS standards for names, street addresses and email addresses will also be released early this summer. SEVIS will convert existing names to the new standards and automatically validate all U.S. street addresses and email addresses. Learn more about the specifics of the address validation, name and email standards on the [SEVIS page on Study in the States](#).

Also this summer, SEVP and the U.S. Department of State will change the Form I-20, "Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status," and the Form DS-2019, "Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor (J-1) Status," to accommodate the new name standards in SEVIS. Additionally, the Form I-20 will have a completely new look. The Department of State will also make minor changes to the Form DS-2019 to include additional name fields.

A new SEVIS downloads page will also launch this summer. School and sponsor officials will be able to download reports to identify which nonimmigrant records were changed as a result of the name, address

or email address standardization. In addition, users will be able to request reprints of Forms I-20 and DS-2019 for multiple nonimmigrant students at a time. The reports and the bulk Forms I-20 feature will be available on a new SEVIS download page.

SEVP is committed to providing stakeholders with information on SEVIS enhancements before, during and after each system release. SEVP uses several methods to communicate upcoming SEVIS enhancements to stakeholders, including the SEVIS Way Ahead video series. In these video updates to the academic community, I highlight SEVIS successes and planned enhancements for the future. View the latest [SEVIS Way Ahead video](#) from October on Study in the States today. Another video update from me will be forthcoming in the next several months.

For more in-depth information about SEVIS enhancements, SEVP hosts free webinars to demonstrate new SEVIS features. The [Study in the States stakeholder webinars page](#) lists past and upcoming SEVIS enhancements webinars. SEVIS webinars are recorded. From this page, users can register for upcoming webinars and access resources, such as webinar recordings, job aids and question and answer documents. Be sure to read the [Study in the States blog](#) and follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) to receive the latest news on upcoming webinars, as well as updates on SEVIS enhancements.

As always, thank you for your ongoing support as we continue our mission of protecting the nation in a manner that does not negatively impact the finest academic system in the world.

Take Care,

Lou



**U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement**

# Meet Field Representative, Jenifer Jaques

Jenifer Jaques is the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) field representative in Portland, Oregon. Ms. Jaques is a member of the first class of field representatives and deployed to her territory in April 2014.

In this question and answer session, Ms. Jaques provides us with an insider prospective on her background and experience as a field representative.

## What experiences made you want to become a field representative?

While working as a principal designated school official (PDSO) in essentially a one-person office at an M and F-approved flight school, I frequently felt as though I was operating in a void. Information was difficult to find and what I could find wasn't always relevant to my school and my student population. Different membership groups did not address my specific needs, as the active network of designated school officials (DSOs) in my area worked at traditional colleges and universities. I spent most of my 10 years working as a PDSO wishing for a central source to turn to where I could be sure I was getting correct and consistent information. When the field representative position was announced, I knew it was the answer to this need and the job of my dreams.

## What is an interesting fact about you?

While working at the flight school, I took advantage of the employee discount to become a licensed airplane pilot. It's an amazing experience to be behind the controls of a small plane, and the view is amazing!

## What is the most valuable thing you have learned since becoming a field representative?

During our training as the first class of field representatives, we requested answers to all of the regulatory "gray areas." We knew that a high percentage of the requests we would be asked in the field would be to clear up the gray areas and give schools information in black and white terms. Over the course of our eight weeks of training, and during the past 11 months of visiting schools, it has become very clear we aren't going to be able to clear up the gray areas completely. Gray areas will always

exist. This was actually very comforting for me to learn. With the varied types of SEVP-certified institutions—from private elementary schools to ballet schools to culinary schools to universities—it is nearly impossible to write a regulation for every situation. Each school needs to develop institutional policies that allow them to operate within the regulatory framework as well as with the unique nature of their programs and student population. Schools must always use the regulations as the guide and be consistent with their internal policies.

## What has prepared you in your role of becoming a field representative?

Both my background in education and serving as a PDSO at a non-standard educational institution prepared me for this role. My teaching background helped me become familiar with different learning styles and watching for cues from my audience to be aware when my message isn't making sense. Having worked at a flight school, for which the regulations weren't specifically written, I spent a lot of time examining the regulations and interpreting the underlying message. I had to take that underlying regulatory message and apply it to our unique setting. This experience gave me a comfort level when it comes to explaining the regulations to DSOs. Because of my past experience, I am well equipped to help DSOs understand the rules and regulations so they can apply them to their various situations and the school can remain compliant while serving their student population in ways that are appropriate and helpful to their needs.

## Based on your experience, what is one recommendation you have for school officials engaging with SEVP?

SEVP is here to help. Honestly. We want schools to be compliant with the regulations. If you need help understanding how to be compliant, ask us. When asking for help be sure to be clear, concise and to the point. There are myriad SEVP-certified institutions and we need your help to understand the intricacies of your unique situation. Continue your communication with us until you feel we fully understand your case to the best of our ability and we will work with you toward finding a solution.

## COUNTERTERRORISM AND CRIMINAL EXPLOITATION UNIT UPDATE

# Compliance with University Research

In addition to academic studies, many colleges and universities also offer unique research in science, engineering and technology. University projects in these fields may be exclusive to the university, in conjunction with federally-backed research or in partnership with the defense industry. As academia becomes more global, by attracting increasing numbers of foreign faculty and students, universities need to be aware of their obligations regarding export controls for these sensitive areas.

The National Security Decision Directive (NSDD 189) established a policy to control the flow of science, technology and engineering information. It is not the intent of the NSDD 189 to restrict the flow of fundamental research, but to protect research results that are restricted for proprietary or national security reasons.

Additional federal regulations, such as the International Trafficking in Arms Regulations (ITAR) and Export Administration Regulations determine who can work on university research projects. Under these regulations, certain technologies may not be shared with all foreign persons, including graduate

students, research assistants, scholars, contractors, research partners, visitors and colleagues at meetings and symposia. University department heads and export control officers should:

- Know what controls apply to an institution's research and if an exemption applies;
- Familiarize themselves with the most updated lists of ITAR-prohibited countries, embargoed countries, sanctioned countries and specifically-denied nationals;
- Be aware of who has access to controlled research and know if the facility is capable of isolating controlled technology; and
- Ensure that transactions/orders for production parts or technology are handled by an export specialist.

If an institution suspects that their research or access has been compromised, or are contacted by an unauthorized person seeking access, notify your local [Homeland Security Investigations office](#) immediately for assistance.

# End-of-Year Reminders for Designated School Officials

As the spring semester comes to a close, many F and M students will graduate, leave for a long-term trip, transfer to a new school or change to another visa classification or status.

To help designated school officials (DSOs) handle these changes and maintain proper reporting in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS), below is a list of reminders:

1. F students must depart the United States no later than 60 days after their program or optional practical training end date;
2. M students must depart the United States no later than 30 days after their program or practical training end date;
3. If a student transfers schools, ensure the transfer release date in SEVIS is accurate and remind transfer students that their new DSO will give them a new Form I-20, "Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status;"
4. F students become eligible to take an annual vacation after completing at least one academic year of their program in the United States. A student who initially enrolls in the spring at a school which does not provide classes for the program in the summer also remains in status during the summer vacation;
5. M students are not eligible for annual vacation;
6. Students traveling abroad during the summer months need their DSOs' emergency contact information and the following documents ready for when they attempt to return to the United States:
  - A signed and up-to-date Form I-20;
  - Valid visa and passport;
  - Evidence of financial support;
  - Evidence of acceptance or enrollment at a Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP)-certified school; and
  - I-901 SEVIS Fee payment receipt.

Remember, if any of your students return from a trip abroad and do not have the proper documentation required by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), they risk not being admitted back into the country. However, a CBP officer may alternatively issue them a Form I-515A, "Notice to Student or Exchange Visitor." This form allows the student temporary entry into the country for 30 days.

You should receive an email about any student who receives a Form I-515A, which describes exactly what is missing or incomplete from the student's documentation and tells them what they need to do.

As a DSO, work with the student to submit all information in one package to SEVP. This package must contain all necessary forms and documentation, including the student's Form I-515A; Form I-20; number on the Form I-94, "Arrival/Departure Record" or print-out; copy of the CBP admission stamp and I-901 SEVIS Fee payment receipt. All paperwork must be mailed to SEVP prior to the "admit until" date on the student's Form I-94 or print-out. More information on the [Form I-515A](#) can be found on [Study in the States](#).



## FINAL RULE

# New Rule Permits U.S. Schools to Increase Number of Designated School Officials

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is amending its regulations under the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) to improve management of international student programs and increase opportunities for study by spouses and children of international students.

Under the amended regulations, SEVP-certified schools have greater flexibility in determining how many designated school officials (DSOs) to nominate. Previously, SEVP-certified schools could only nominate a maximum of 10 DSOs. The new regulation removes the cap and permits SEVP-certified schools to nominate an appropriate number of DSOs based

on their school's specific needs. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, however, must review each nominee and maintains discretion on whether to approve or deny the nomination.

Additionally, the new rule permits dependents of international students to engage in study at SEVP-certified schools in the United States as long as they are enrolled in less than a full course of study.

Currently, the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) only allows SEVP-certified schools to input up to 10 DSOs. In the next SEVIS release, scheduled for late June, SEVP will

include the ability for schools to designate a suitable number of school officials based on their requirements. SEVP will be broadcasting updates regarding the SEVIS release in the coming weeks via the SEVIS message board, Study in the States and social media platforms.

This new rule stems from recommendations provided by the [DHS Homeland Security Academic Advisory Council](#). The amended regulations go into effect 30 days after it was posted to the [Federal Register](#) on April 29, 2015. Additional information about the amended regulations may be found on the [Federal Register website](#) and on [Study in the States](#).



# DHS HSAAC Third Anniversary



This spring marks the third anniversary of the [Homeland Security Academic Advisory Council \(HSAAC\)](#). Managed by the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) [Office of Academic Engagement \(OAE\)](#), HSAAC is a DHS federal advisory committee comprised of a diverse group of university presidents, academic leaders and interagency partners charged with advising the secretary and senior leaders on matters related to homeland security and the academic community.

In the three years since its inaugural meeting in March 2012, the Council's work has made a significant impact on DHS and its engagement with the academic community. Through its six subcommittees, including one focused on international students, HSAAC has delivered more than 100 recommendations to DHS. Of these recommendations, 82 percent have been fully or partially implemented, resulting in key accomplishments for both the Department and the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP).

According to DHS Executive Director for Academic Engagement Lauren Kielsmeier, "the Council has been an asset to the Department and its efforts to engage both with the academic community and international student population. I am proud of the Council's accomplishments and grateful to its members for their service."

As a direct result of HSAAC recommendations, DHS has increased transparency and engagement on international student issues. To increase transparency into policy development, SEVP began publishing draft policy guidance for public input on [Study in the States](#). To date, 14 pieces of draft international student policy guidance surrounding topics such as conditional admission, bridge programs and flight training have been published for public comment.

HSAAC recommendations have also enhanced SEVP's mission through increased collaboration with government partners on academic community engagement. In December, SEVP partnered with the White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), OAE and the U.S. Department of State's EducationUSA network to host a [webinar](#) with HBCUs regarding international students. Designed specifically for HBCUs, the webinar included an overview of the international student immigration process, information related to the recruitment of international students and compliance with federal regulations, and resources available to international students and institutions.

Additionally, HSAAC has been instrumental in linking two important mission-related areas for DHS – emergency preparedness and international students. In October 2014, HSAAC, the Federal Emergency Management Agency and OAE hosted the [National Seminar and Tabletop Exercise for Institutions of Higher Education](#), the first in a series of tabletop exercises targeted to institutions of higher education. More than 100 participants from 21 institutions of higher education attended the event to engage in a series of workshop sessions on topics relevant to campus preparedness and resilience, including international students. The event provided a forum for discussion and sharing of best practices in campus resilience, with a focus on integrating international students into college and university emergency planning.

For more information on the Council and its work, visit [HSAAC's Web page](#). You can also sign up to receive monthly updates from OAE on [DHS's Academic Engagement Web page](#).

## Study in the States Enhancements

In March, Study in the States launched a new interactive tool: [Mapping SEVIS by the Numbers](#). This interactive map utilizes data from the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) to illustrate information about international students studying in the United States. Using the map, users can view SEVIS data to determine the number of international students studying in the United States from each continent, region and country in the world. It also enables users to view historical data from the past year and see trends in top student-sending countries and programs of study.

Navigation on Study in the States has also been improved. The top navigation bar now includes a direct link to the [Study in the States blog](#), which is updated daily. All blog posts now include publication dates to make it easier to find timely entries. Additionally, the "Tools" dropdown has been redesigned to provide users with easier access to helpful resources.



# Watch the New Spring/Summer 2015 Conference Presentation!

The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) keeps its stakeholders informed of important program news. [The Spring/Summer 2015 Conference Presentation](#) is now available through the Study in the States [conferences and outreach page](#). If you are unable to attend an event this season, you can watch the recorded presentation to keep up to date with the latest SEVP news and updates.

This season, SEVP introduced a new viewing format that allows stakeholders to select topics of their choice and watch a brief, five-minute video containing pertinent program updates. Stakeholders can select videos on the following topics:

- **Policy and Regulatory Updates:** Learn about SEVP's next steps for draft and interim final guidance, upcoming draft guidance priorities and regulatory updates.
- **News from the School Certification Unit:** Get the latest news on Form I-17, "Petition for Approval of School for Attendance by Nonimmigrant Student," updates; review the items that require adjudication during recertification; and hear tips and best practices for school officials.
- **Student and School Hot Topics:** Hear the latest trends and issues affecting international students and SEVP-certified schools, including how school officials can assist students that receive a Form I-515A, "Notice to Student or Exchange Visitor," at a U.S. port of entry.

- **Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) Enhancements:** Hear the most up to date information concerning upcoming SEVIS releases and learn about the many resources available to school officials to assist with SEVIS reporting requirements.
- **Stakeholder Support:** Listen to updates from the SEVP Response Center and SEVIS Help Desk, and hear the latest news about SEVP field representatives.
- **Engage with SEVP:** Learn about the many resources available to school officials and international students on Study in the States, as well as how you can connect with SEVP through social media.

We want your feedback about this presentation and any other SEVP outreach events you attend! Take the brief [Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey](#) on Study in the States. We review your comments throughout the year and incorporate your thoughts into future presentations. Your opinion is vital to SEVP continuing to meet your needs.

Additionally, you can stay up-to-date on the latest SEVP conferences, outreach news and events with the monthly SEVP Conference Bulletin. To subscribe, email your request to [SEVPOutreach@ice.dhs.gov](mailto:SEVPOutreach@ice.dhs.gov).

## CONTACT US

### SEVP Contacts

The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) maintains open communication with international students and academic officials to provide the necessary support about the international student process.

Our offices are open Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Eastern Time, except holidays.

**Phone:** 703-603-3400

**Email:** [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 7 a.m. and 8 p.m. Eastern Time or email [SEVISHelpDesk@ice.dhs.gov](mailto:SEVISHelpDesk@ice.dhs.gov)

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

### 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)