



Oppose the ICE Ruling Threatening International Students

Support Retention of International Intellectual Capital

Columbia University Physics Graduate Council

Contribution of international students to American competitiveness¹:

\$41 billion to the U.S. economy • Half a million U.S. jobs

1 in 5 startups worth over \$1 billion • Majority of PhD Research Workforce

- [SEVP recently modified](#) the exemption made for **nonimmigrant students on F-1 and M-1** visas.
 - The order forces students to take in-person classes during a pandemic solely to keep their legal visa status, **risking their lives** and the lives in their community.
- This ruling completely **disregards** the **structure of PhD programs** and the effect on **scientific research**.
 - Students in their first years have to pursue research and teach while also taking courses, which are likely going to be online in the Fall of 2020.
 - The rule has **no provisions for students who'll take online courses but also teach and do research in person**, impacting the progress of science in the US.
 - **Grad student stipends** are dependent on their research and teaching.
- It also disregards the **impact of time zones** for students taking remote online courses or teaching them as TAs, making it unsustainable and affecting their academic progress.
- It impacts students' **mental health**.
 - Students don't know what to do about **housing** with so much uncertainty.
 - Certain students **don't have a safe home** to go to; their countries might have **travel bans** with the US, **spiking COVID-19** cases, or rules like the Chinese National Security Law that might make **Hong Kong students face imprisonment** for life if they go back.
 - Certain students have **partners and children of different nationalities**, and they would likely be separated given the order and current travel bans.
 - The same applies to students whose **families live in countries other than their birth countries**.
- US visa centers and **consulates across the globe are closed** due to the pandemic.
 - Once the ruling is no longer in effect, **students might be unable to renew their visas**, so we will lose them permanently.
- The impact of this ruling on the **American economy and private sector** can be on the order of billions of dollars and millions of jobs.
- About **half of Columbia's graduate student population is on F-1 visas**.

¹ Further information available at [NAFSA's website](#) and from an [IHE's article](#).

Please oppose this new ICE ruling and any future orders of similar nature. Some steps congress can take:

1. Write a **letter to DHS and ICE** requesting the rule to be rescinded.
 - a. Also **ask for clarification** on the ruling's language and how this will affect students in:
 - i. Life-threatening situations.
 - ii. Programs with in-person responsibilities despite online classes, such as PhD students who need to teach and do research.
2. **Raise awareness** among congress members on both sides of the aisle about this issue and its unintended consequences on students' lives, American science and the American economy.

How congress can help international students so rulings like this have less of an impact on their lives and on their community:

1. Send a letter to the State Department asking for:
 - a. An **alternative method to renew and emit F-1 visas**, such as mail-in or electronic option while visa processing centers are closed **during the pandemic**.
 - b. A safe way under which **students and researchers currently stranded in countries under a travel ban** can return to the US, such as quarantining once they enter the country.
2. Support **domestic revalidation of F-type visas**
 - a. **Hold a hearing** to find out what the State Department would need to allow for domestic revalidation.
 - b. **Appropriate**, as necessary, resources to enable F-type visa domestic revalidation.
 - c. **Amend the 2002 Enhanced Border Security and Visa Entry Reform Act** to close State Department loopholes disallowing domestic F-type visa renewal.
 - d. Important in times of public health crises and travel restrictions such as the **COVID-19** outbreak.
 - e. Relieves financial burden on international students.
 - f. Prevents disruptions on their academic and research activities due to travel.
3. Encourage investigation on the increasing **[F-1 student visa and OPT processing delays](#)**.
4. Oppose attempts to **[challenge](#)** the **[Optional Practical Training \(OPT\)](#)** and support efforts to expand this program.
5. Support an amendment to **[S. 386 / H.R. 1044, the Fairness for High-Skilled Immigrants Act of 2019](#)** that would prioritize applicants who have earned advanced degrees in the US:
 - a. Annually reserve **half of all [EB-2 visas](#)** for applicants who have
 - i. **Earned advanced degrees from the United States and**
 - ii. **Have spent at least 5 years in the country.**
6. Support **[S. 1744 / H.R. 4623, the Keep STEM Talent Act of 2019](#)** that would support scientists who have earned advanced degrees in the US to stay in America after graduation.