



United States Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

October 4, 2018

Karen Da Silva
Via Email: iscc@nagps.org

Dear Ms. Da Silva:

We are writing in response to the 56 student associations' June 6 letter to the Department of State requesting the Department offer nonimmigrant student (F) visa renewal services in the United States. Your letter was forwarded to the Visa Office, Outreach and Inquiries Division for a reply. Thank you for your patience in awaiting a response.

The Department of State values the contributions to our society and economy that students from other countries and other cultures make, and we recognize that the benefits to the United States from international students continue after those students have completed their studies and returned home. We understand that international students do not remain in the United States for the duration of their studies. Many return to their home countries for holidays and other personal reasons, and some need to travel abroad for educational development and to participate in international conferences. Those students who do not have valid visas must obtain new ones in order to re-enter the United States, and we appreciate that students may be inconvenienced by this requirement. As a remedy, you asked that the Department resume state-side issuance of nonimmigrant visas, and include F visas in the classes of visas eligible for renewal in the United States.

As you correctly noted, the Department of State did, at one time, revalidate in the United States nonimmigrant visas in certain categories that had been issued abroad. However, the Department ceased the revalidation of nonimmigrant visas in the United States, except for foreign diplomats and officials of international organizations as of October 26, 2004 following the passage of section 303 of the Enhanced Border Security and Visa Entry Reform Act. Section 303 requires that [we] "shall issue to aliens only machine-readable, tamper-resistant visas and other travel and entry documents that use biometric identifiers." We determined that it was not feasible to do this stateside and the Department required visa applicants to depart the United States to obtain new visas.

While we are unable to offer domestic revalidation for F visas, other efforts are being made to facilitate the travel of students to the United States. This includes giving priority to students and exchange visitors when scheduling interview appointments at U.S. Embassies and Consulates abroad and supporting, through liaison with a number of academic and scientific organizations,

the travel of student attendees to conferences and other meetings both inside the United States and overseas.

We value your input on how we may better welcome students to our colleges and universities and wish to assure you that we will continue to explore options to improve our services for all categories of visa applicants consistent with our commitment to national security.

We hope this information is helpful.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Cristin Heinbeck". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "C".

Cristin Heinbeck
Outreach and Inquiries Division
Visa Services