

November 13, 2012 Webinar (Event History, Alerts, and Communications)

Questions and Answers



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Implementation Time Line

Q: When will SEVIS II be implemented?

A: There is no scheduled implementation date for SEVIS II. SEVP is in discussion with DHS leadership on the next steps in the SEVIS II implementation process. It will not be before 2014.

Alerts

Q: Will everyone get alerts in SEVIS II? What kind of alerts will they see?

A: Yes. All SEVIS users will receive alerts. The types of alerts they will see depends upon their role(s) in SEVIS II. Examples (not exhaustive) of roles: PDSO, DSO, RO, ARO, Group PDSO, Head of School, Batch Specialist, IT Contact, Payer, Attorney, Nonimmigrant Student or Exchange Visitor, Nonimmigrant Spouse/Dependent, Nonimmigrant with no association, and Account Manager. Some users may hold more than one role, and will receive alerts appropriate to each role.

- Every user will receive alerts relating to their customer account. For example, F-1 students and their spouse/dependents will receive alerts notifying them of the need to validate the information in their customer account. P/DSOs will receive alerts regarding their annual training.
- Nonimmigrants will receive alerts relating to their status and program participation. For example, nonimmigrants will receive an alert when their program is about to end.
- P/DSOs and RO/AROs will receive alerts relating to their own customer accounts, to their institutions, to nonimmigrants associated with those institutions.
- Heads of School will receive alerts relating to their own customer account or to their institution.
- A user who is a Head of School and a PDSO will receive and can view alerts as described above for each role. Parents who are Account Managers for their children will see their own alerts and those for the children.

Q: How do P/DSOs return to an alert list after working on a student's record?

A: In current SEVIS, returning to an alert list after accessing a student record from that list is not a one-click process. It is awkward and takes some time to navigate through a series of screens to return to the alert list in question. For certain alerts in SEVIS II, P/DSOs will be able to take action on the student records and will be returned to the alert list. For other alerts, the P/DSO will be taken away from the alert list to the student record and will have to navigate back to the alert list.

Q: When P/DSOs view the nonimmigrant records, can they see all of the alerts that the nonimmigrants receive?

A: No. P/DSO can see only school-related alerts for nonimmigrants. They will not see customer account-related alerts.

Q: Will students be able to see a registration alert if the P/DSO at their schools still needs to report their registration for the term?

A: Yes. Students will receive an alert if the P/DSO has not updated their record to show they have registered by the Next Session Start Date. P/DSOs will also receive those alerts. Students will also receive an informational alert when their record is registered. A significant number of P/DSOs currently fail to update SEVIS registration in a timely manner. Those students may be fully engaged in their academic programs, but the students' SEVIS records are subsequently terminated by the system for failure to enroll. Since they cannot view their SEVIS records, students have no idea this has happened. They often discover

it during travel, during transfers, or when applying for immigration benefits such as optional practical training. By that time one or more sessions may not have been reported, and correcting the error costs the student time, resources, and possible lost or delayed benefits. SEVP hopes that alerting students to this requirement will give them the tools to collaborate more effectively with their P/DSOs in the management of their immigration status.

Q: Are alerts meant to be comprehensive and accurate?

A: Yes. As SEVP developed the requirements for SEVIS II, we carefully examined all of the events that occur during the lifecycle of a student. SEVP identified which events trigger alerts and to whom those alerts should be sent. The list of alerts should be comprehensive enough so that both P/DSOs and students know when to take an action. In addition, alerts will have short, explanatory messages and links to additional information where appropriate.

Q: Will P/DSOs receive alerts when students change their addresses?

A: Yes. School officials will receive alerts when students change their customer account information. By accessing individual student records from the alert list, P/DSOs will be able to see what customer account information was changed.

Communications through SEVIS II

Q: What is the messaging capability in SEVIS II?

A: SEVIS II will keep and expand upon the Broadcast Message functionality that currently exists in SEVIS. It will add the ability for certain users to send and receive messages through the system which will then become part of the user's complete record.

Students will be able to compose and submit messages to P/DSOs, selecting from a pre-defined drop-down list of e-mail subjects. These messages will then be posted on a page that is accessible to all P/DSOs at the school.

P/DSOs also have the ability to generate messages through the SEVIS II:

- First, they can create and edit auto-responses to the student generated messages. The school determines the content of these messages, which could potentially inform students of any necessary next steps or even re-direct them to a website, office consultation, etc. for assistance. Example, messages from students regarding OPT might receive an auto-response directing them to the OPT information and instructions on the international office's website.
- Secondly, they can generate an *ad hoc* message for a specific student or group of students. Example: An end of program reminder for those graduating in the spring.
- Third, they can create template messages to be sent to students in specific circumstances. Examples: (1) A reminder or instructions to students who appear on a specific alert list. P/DSOs would select those individuals who would receive the message, apply the template message, and submit the message through the system. (2) Standard reminders and instructions regarding travel during break/vacation, time and place for an OPT workshop, or curricular practical training information for all of the music school students.

SEVIS II does not provide functionality for e-mail conversations. It is not an e-mail system and is not meant to replace existing channels of communication currently used by schools to manage interactions with students. P/DSOs will need to decide how best to incorporate this functionality into their communications strategy.

Q: Can other P/DSOs see student messages to another P/DSO?

A: Yes. When students send a message through SEVIS II, it displays on a page where all P/DSOs for the school can view it. It does not matter if students only want to contact their assigned advisor – the message goes to all P/DSOs at that institution.

Q: Are SEVIS II messages sent to the student's institutional e-mail as well as to their SEVIS account?

A: No. Messages generated through SEVIS II are only accessible through SEVIS II. It is not a true email system. It is only a way of initiating a process or procedure. It is important to note that all e-mail messages generated through SEVIS II are captured as part of the historical record functionality and can be fully accessed by the Government.

Q: Can template messages be edited?

A: Yes. P/DSOs can edit or delete existing template messages or create new ones. There are two types of editing the P/DSO can perform: permanent changes to the template or temporary modifications are not saved to the permanent template.

Permanent changes are just that – a permanent, saved change to the template. P/DSOs would access the template message, edit the text, and save the changes. The new template language then appears in any messages sent to nonimmigrants from that point forward.

A temporary modification is a one-time editing of the template message for an individual or group of students. The P/DSO selects the student(s) to whom the message should be sent, selects the template, and modifies the text of the message. If the changes are not saved, then the text of the original template message remains unchanged. If the P/DSO saves the text, it will overwrite the text of the original template. P/DSOs also have the option of creating and saving a new template out of the modified message. Example of a temporary change: The P/DSO has created an announcement message regarding an OPT workshop. The time and place are blank or contain an obsolete date. The P/DSO selects the template, modifies it with the time and place information, and sends it without saving the change.

Q: If a P/DSO wants to send a template message to ten students, but one of those students has a special circumstance that requires the message to be modified slightly, can the P/DSO edit the message for just that one student?

A: It depends on how the P/DSO opts to send the message. If the P/DSO has selected the 10 students from an alert list, the P/DSO cannot update the template for the one student whose message needs to be modified. All 10 students would get the same message. A better strategy would be to select the nine students who don't need a modified message and send the template message to them. Then select the single student for whom the message needs to be different, make a temporary modification to the template and submit the message. The P/DSO would not want to save that modification as that would overwrite the original template.

Q: You mentioned that all P/DSOs will receive the students' messages. Does this include all campuses of a university?

A: All P/DSOs listed on the I-17 for the school with which the student is associated will receive the message. P/DSOs at other schools in the same group will not receive the message.

Q: How will one school official know whether another school official has already responded to a student's message? Will the message no longer appear in the list of incoming messages after someone else responds?

A: The system would mark the message as having been read or not read. P/DSOs can respond to a specific message and SEVIS II will record that response. Once a P/DSO has handled the message, they have the option to archive it. School officials will need to evaluate this functionality to determine how best to incorporate it into their business processes.

Q: The messaging system may be great for some schools, but not so good for others. The functionality raises several questions:

- Are schools required to use the messaging functionality in SEVIS II? Our school has its own scheduling system that has a messaging feature which we would like to continue to use. Students must log in each and every day.
- Can P/DSOs manage the messaging system to determine what P/DSOs and nonimmigrants can send, receive, or view? For example, can a school turn off P/DSO and student ability to use SEVIS II's messaging functionality to send messages?

- **Can schools narrow down the drop-down list of message subjects that a student can send and have an auto-response for all other questions?**

A: Schools are not required to use the messaging functionality of SEVIS II. Schools can continue to use their existing communication systems, or can use the SEVIS II functionality and their own systems in tandem as best suits their processes. However, schools cannot “turn off” the functionality to prevent P/DSOs or students from using the messaging functionality to send, receive, or view messages. Schools that choose not to use this functionality, or that wish to discourage or redirect its use will need to create an automatic response to student-generated messages that clearly indicates that the school does not use this feature and redirects students to the appropriate mechanism for initiating the communication. Schools that wish to use some message topics, but not others, can create an auto-generated messages for each topic. Schools cannot change the list of message subjects, as these are part of the general functionality.

Q: If all P/DSOs are receiving messages, it may be confusing and difficult for each advisor to check to find messages from their students. Is there a way to create a dropdown list so students can select the P/DSO, or designate a field of study next to the student's name to make it easier?

A: Students will not be able to select a P/DSO from a drop-down list; however, messages do appear in a table that can be sorted. For schools that have assigned students to particular P/DSOs, the name of the associated P/DSO displays in the table. Schools will need to assess the tool and determine how best to use the messaging functionality given their particular business processes. SEVIS II is not an e-mail system. It will include a simple message delivery system that may be a good way to initiate contact about an issue. Some schools may find the functionality useful; others may not.

Q: Does a student need to log in to SEVIS II to see a message?

A: Yes. Students will need to log in to SEVIS II to see their messages. Some messages, such as those sent by the Government, will trigger an e-mail or a text to the student that tells them to log in to SEVIS to check their alerts or messages. Note the distinction between messages in the system and e-mail messages. The system will send certain kinds of messages to users’ e-mail addresses. Examples: A P/DSO may send or respond to an OPT or program extension message inside the system, but the system might send a notice by e-mail reminding a user that the Customer Account may be disabled for failure to log in within a specified period.

Miscellaneous

Q: Please explain the "Annual Training" requirement for P/DSOs.

A: In the future, P/DSOs will be required to complete annual on-line training to ensure that their knowledge of regulations and procedures remain current. This requirement does not exist today, but will be implemented with SEVIS II.

Q: Please define what is meant by "association."

A: This is part of SEVIS II’s new vocabulary. In the one-person, one-record environment of SEVIS II, anyone who accesses SEVIS has a customer account. The accounts are, for the most part, managed by the user. The user’s role within the system is not defined until a relationship is created between that customer account and another entity such as a school or a program sponsor. In the SEVIS II context, the act of creating that relationship is called creating an association.

The type of association determines the user’s role and level of permissions in SEVIS II. When a P/DSO begins the process of creating a COE on behalf of newly-admitted students, the first task the P/DSO completes must be to associate the students’ customer account with the school. This defines the account holders as F or M- students with a prospect relationship to the school, and gives them the level of system access and permissions afforded nonimmigrant prospective students.

Likewise, when a PDSO adds a DSO, the prospective DSO’s customer account is associated with the school and a role is assigned. It is only after this association has been made that the user can access the

functionality inherent to that role.

Over time, a user's associations and roles within SEVIS II may change, but the same customer account will always remain the same.

Q: Will there still be a limit of 10 DSO's per school?

A: Current regulations limit the number of DSOs a school can have to 10. SEVIS II is designed to accommodate any change in regulatory limits on DSOs. SEVP is updating some of its regulations including the DSO limitation. Since those regulations are still in the draft stage, no details are available at this time.

Q: Where can we find webinar recordings and the webinar Q&As?

A: Webinar recordings and materials can be found on the SEVIS II webinar page on the *Study in the States* website.