



# SEVP InFocus Webinar

## Aug. 10, 2016

### Webinar Script

#### Slide 1: Title Slide

##### **MODERATOR:**

- Hi everybody! My name is Lauren Caricato and I want to welcome you to SEVP's third SEVP InFocus Webinar. Over the next hour, we'll discuss important program news and updates.
- I'll be moderating today's webinar, and am joined by Marissa Tinsley and Tandice Ghajar from the SEVP Strategic Communications Team.
- Marissa and Tandice, could you briefly introduce yourselves to our viewers?

#### Slide 2: Today's Presenters

##### **MARISSA:**

- My name is Marissa Tinsley and I started working at SEVP in 2010 in the School Certification Unit doing Initial certifications. I later transferred to my current position on the Strategic Communications Team, where I now work with Tandice.

##### **TANDICE:**

- Hi everyone; I am Tandice Ghajar and I'm also on the SEVP Strategic Communications Team. I used to work in SEVP's compliance unit and also did some policy-related work. My primary focus is student issues.

#### Slide 3: Presentation Overview

##### **MODERATOR:**

- Thanks for joining us today!
- First, I hope everyone took a moment to complete our poll. If you haven't had a chance to take it, please do so now. This information will help us know how many of you are watching today.



- I also have two quick notes for everyone:
  - Please download and take a look at our **Hyperlink Appendix**, which contains links to all of the web pages mentioned during this presentation. You can access it on the right-hand side of your screen.
  - Second, a **recording** of today's presentation and webinar script will be available in a few days on Study in the States – the same place you went to access this webinar.
    - We'll notify you when this presentation is available through a Study in the States blog post and social media messages, so if any of your colleagues weren't able to join you today, let them know they can watch it next week!

## Slide 4: The Latest News

### MODERATOR:

- Now that we have those housekeeping notes out of the way, let's get to it! We'll start with an exciting announcement from SEVP.
- I'm sure some folks out there have heard rumor of a portal for post-completion OPT students to provide information, so today we want to officially introduce the SEVP Portal.
- Tandice, can you tell us a little more about this portal?



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## Slide 5: Introducing the SEVP Portal

### TANDICE:

- Sure thing, Lauren.
- The SEVP Portal is a new tool for international students on post-completion OPT to enter their own personal and employer information. It's important to note that the portal will not provide students with direct access to SEVIS, and they'll only be able to view and change a limited amount of information.
- Through the portal, students can add or edit:
  - Their phone number,
  - Mailing and physical address, and
  - Employer information.
- We're hoping this will hold students accountable for reporting requirements and help DSOs manage post-completion OPT student information.

### MODERATOR:

- Just to be sure that I'm hearing you correctly – the SEVP Portal won't be available to *all* international students?

### TANDICE:

- That's correct – the SEVP Portal will only be available for students on post-completion OPT. So this will certainly benefit those students and DSOs dealing with the recent STEM OPT reporting requirements.
- And, just a note, STEM OPT students won't be able to add new employer information through the portal due to Form I-983 requirements.

### MODERATOR:

- I'm sure the folks listening today are certainly excited to hear about this resource and want to know when it will be available. When can DSOs and students expect the portal to deploy?

### TANDICE:

- SEVP will launch the portal as part of a scheduled December 2016 SEVIS release.



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**MODERATOR:**

- Good thing — I'm sure December will be here faster than we think.
- Is there anything DSOs can do now to start preparing for the portal deployment?

**TANDICE:**

- Yes. DSOs can start preparing by ensuring all student email addresses listed in SEVIS are accurate and up-to-date.
- Email addresses will be very important to the portal – students will not be able to create an account without a working email address.



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## Slide 6: Portal Functionality

### MODERATOR:

- Good to know. I recommend that any DSOs listening today begin checking your student's email addresses now rather than later.
- So, Tandice, we know what the portal is, but what exactly does it do?

### TANDICE:

- When a DSO recommends a student for OPT and the status of the OPT request in SEVIS changes to Active, SEVIS will push data to the SEVP Portal. Shortly after, the portal will send an email to the student with a unique link and direct the student to a page to create an account.

### MODERATOR:

- I'm sure many folks listening want to know how this will affect school officials. What will they be able to do with the portal?

### TANDICE:

- Good question, Lauren. After the portal goes live, DSOs will be able to:
  - Continue to add, edit and remove employer information;
  - Resend SEVP Portal account creation emails to students;
  - Access reports on data changed by students; and
  - Receive an alert list when students make changes.



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## Slide 7: Stay Informed — Upcoming SEVP Portal Communications

### **MODERATOR:**

- All in all, these sound like some big changes coming down the road. I'm sure we'll provide resources to stakeholders and host webinars to communicate these changes.

### **TANDICE:**

- We will. In November 2016, we'll host a webinar for DSOs and students that provides an overview of the portal and what changes the academic and international student communities can expect. This webinar will also provide stakeholders with an opportunity to ask questions directly to SEVP representatives.
- We'll also have blog posts and announcements on Study in the States and our associated social media channels that provide stakeholders with updates on the portal. And before the portal goes live in December, we'll launch a dedicated section on Study in the States with resources and information for stakeholders.

### **MODERATOR:**

- All good to know. And Tandice is exactly right – we rely heavily on our social media avenues to send out messages when something important happens.
- Moving on to our next topic: final policy guidance.
- Marissa, let's get you involved in the conversation; can you please talk through the newly released final guidance?



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## **Slide 8: Final Policy Guidance**

### **MARISSA:**

- Sure thing!
- SEVP recently released two final policy guidance documents, one on conditional admission and the other on the Form I-20 English proficiency field. As a reminder, final policy guidance establishes standards that schools are expected to comply with, and are used in SEVP adjudications.
- For example, the conditional admission guidance offers an interpretation of the Form I-20 issuance regulation for prospective F-1 and M-1 students, while the other guidance document explains how to utilize the English proficiency checkboxes on the Form I-20.

### **MODERATOR:**

- Great – thanks, Marissa!
- I want to give a quick plug here to our Study in the States SEVP Guidance for Comment page, which is listed in the Hyperlink Appendix. The two guidance documents Marissa just mentioned are located on this page – definitely worth checking out if your school is impacted by this final guidance.



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## **Slide 9: Notifications and Follow-up**

### **MODERATOR:**

- This makes for a great transition into our next section, which will cover upcoming guidance documents, along with SEVIS enhancements and updates from the Field Representative Unit.
- Marissa, since you were just talking guidance, why don't you start us off by highlighting some additional guidance documents SEVP has in the works?



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## **Slide 10: Upcoming Policy Guidance**

### **MARISSA:**

- Of course, Lauren!
- SEVP has several different upcoming policy guidance documents, which we've listed on the slide. I just want to highlight a couple of guidance documents, including:
  - Annual vacation and school breaks for F-1 and M-1 students;
  - Definition of the academic year; and
  - Several guidance documents regarding student employment.
- I do want to note, though, that SEVP does not have a specific timeline for the release of these guidance documents. However, anyone can sign up to receive notice when SEVP posts new guidance through the Study in the States Guidance for Comment page.



## Slide 11: Poll – Upcoming Policy Guidance

### MODERATOR:

- Thanks for the tip, Marissa.
- I want to take a second here to poll our stakeholders about the policy guidance documents Marissa just mentioned. At the bottom of your screen, you'll see a question asking about which policy guidance document you would most like to see released.

***[Allow attendees 30 seconds to take poll – comment on incoming results]***

- Thank you everyone for taking that poll.
- Two things to mention here before we wrap up on policy guidance:
  - First, the Guidance for Comment page is located within the schools section of Study in the States, and the web link is in the Hyperlink Appendix that I referenced at the beginning of our session.
  - Second, when you do sign up for the notifications, you'll be sent a message from SEVP when we post draft, interim final and final guidance documents – so again, a really useful resource!
- Let's go ahead and switch gears to SEVIS and some upcoming enhancements. Tandice, can you talk about the upcoming SEVIS Release 6.28, which comes out this August?



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## Slide 12: SEVIS Enhancements

### TANDICE:

- Sure thing. SEVIS Release 6.28 will deploy two days from now, on August 12, 2016, and will introduce the improvements shown on your screen.
- On the slide, you'll also notice that we plan to deploy a big release in September 2016 that will affect both school and student data in SEVIS.
- Finally, we'll have another release in December 2016 that introduces the SEVP Portal functionality that I discussed earlier. This is going to be another big release, so be sure to check the SEVIS Help Hub for release planning guides and other resources.

### MODERATOR:

- Definitely some exciting developments for our SEVIS users in the coming months. And that link to the SEVIS Help Hub is located in our handy Hyperlink Appendix.
- Also, to stress what Tandice just said – the resources in the SEVIS Help Hub are phenomenal, and the SEVIS team does a great job educating y'all for upcoming releases by hosting SEVIS webinars. If you're not already a regular viewer, definitely make sure to check them out – there are a couple coming up in the near future:
  - On August 12 — this Friday — we'll host a SEVIS webinar about the Form I-17; this webinar will let users know about some of those Form I-17 changes coming down the road.
  - Additionally, the following Friday — August 19 — we'll hold a webinar that discusses some of the functionality deployed with SEVIS Release 6.28.
- Marissa, let's jump back to you; any other remaining updates folks want to hear about?



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## Slide 13: Around SEVP

### MARISSA:

- Absolutely, Lauren, and I'll start with Remedial Action Plans – SEVP began emailing these to schools with inaccurate information in student records, so this is pertinent to a lot of our viewers.
- These Remedial Action Plans were sent for reasons such as impossible birth dates, like January 5, 1900, or education levels that the school is not authorized to offer, such as a K-12 school offering flight courses.
- If you receive one of these letters, please respond according to the instructions provided by SEVP.

### MODERATOR:

- Good to know and, for all you school officials out there, make sure that you're keeping those student records up to date.
- What about any news from our SEVP field representatives? I think that we've deployed pretty much all field representatives at this point?

### MARISSA:

- Actually, we have three remaining vacancies across the United States. Right now, we don't have field representatives deployed in the following locations:
  - Arlington, Virginia,
  - San Jose, California, and
  - Kansas City, Missouri.
- If you're located in any of those territories, keep contacting the SRC for answers to your questions.

### MODERATOR:

- So, I just want to reiterate – if you're a school official in one of these territories – make sure you contact the SRC with any questions. We're hoping to get these vacancies filled shortly.



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## **Slide 14: Don't Forget**

### **MODERATOR:**

- Thanks Marissa – that is all really great stuff!
- OK, let's move on to our next section. We want to provide our school officials with some tips and reminders for the Form I-515A and best practices for the start of the academic year.
- Marissa, let's give you a short break. Tandice, why don't you cover this topic?



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## Slide 15: Form I-515A Termination

### TANDICE:

- Yes, Lauren, these are definitely some topics DSOs should know, especially as we start a new school year.
- DSOs will receive an email notification from SEVP if one of their students receives a Form I-515A. If your student receives a Form I-515A, you should help them submit all paperwork to SEVP within 30 days.

### MODERATOR:

- I just want to jump in here, Tandice. When you say paperwork, is there a place where DSOs can go for a list of the required items they should submit to SEVP?

### TANDICE:

- Yep – the “What is a Form I-515A?” page on Study in the States is a great resource to help both international students and DSOs with handling a Form I-515A. That link is included in our Hyperlink Appendix and on the screen.
- And another thing: DSOs should also know about certain circumstances when a student receives a Form I-515A at a port of entry, and then a new SEVIS record from the school.
- In this situation, we cannot adjudicate the Form I-515A, and the student must depart and re-enter the United States on the new SEVIS record.

### MODERATOR:

- So it sounds like school officials should not issue a new SEVIS record to a student that receives a Form I-515A?

### TANDICE:

- That’s correct. It’s better just to respond to the Form I-515A than create a new SEVIS record for the student.
- Also, school officials should remember that SEVP now sends an “Intent to Terminate” notice to students and/or their dependents after we fail to receive any response to the Form I-515A. This notice gives students an additional 14 days as of the date the letter is sent to respond to the Form I-515A either:



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- By submitting a complete Form I-515A and supporting paperwork, or
  - By leaving the United States.
  - If after this second opportunity to submit the documentation the student still fails to comply, SEVP will terminate the student's record in SEVIS.



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## Slide 16: Poll: Form I-515A Termination

### MODERATOR:

- And SEVIS record terminations are never a good thing.
- I want to take a second here to poll our audience about this new procedure – were you aware of the new process for Form I-515A terminations? Let us know by taking the poll on the bottom of your screen.

***[Allow attendees 30 seconds to take poll – comment on incoming results]***

- Great, thank you everyone!
- Tandice, if folks haven't heard about this change, where can they go to get information?



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## **Slide 17: Form I-515A Termination**

### **TANDICE:**

- Additional information about the noncompliance termination procedure is available as a PDF on [ICE.gov/SEVP](https://ice.dhs.gov/SEVP). If you have any questions about this new feature – definitely go here for information.

### **MODERATOR:**

- And we've included a link to that PDF in the Hyperlink Appendix for easy reference.
- OK, speaking of arriving at school; Marissa, could you talk through our best practices for DSOs on this topic?



## Slide 18: Best Practices — Back to School

*Editorial note: Please note that the webinar recording incorrectly refers to the deadline for registering new students as “30 days after the Program Start Date.” The correct information is “DSOs must register new students no later than 30 days after the Initial Session Start Date as listed in SEVIS.”*

### MARISSA:

- Great idea, Lauren.
- First thing, we recommend that DSOs develop a check-in process for arriving students. This process should include a way for students to meet their DSO and to make sure students are aware of regulations about maintaining their student status.
- Next, it is important for DSOs to keep up-to-date with registering new and returning students. Remember, DSOs are responsible for reporting information for every student issued a Form I-20, including those that do not arrive on campus.
- There are a couple registration deadlines to note:
  - DSOs must register new students no more than 30 days after the Initial Session Start Date as listed in SEVIS, and
  - Register returning students no more than 30 days after the deadline for class registration, typically the session start date in SEVIS.

### MODERATOR:

- Great reminders, Marissa. These might seem like basic reminders, but we still get a lot of questions from stakeholders around this time of the year. It might even be helpful to mark these dates on your office calendar or set up a reminder in your personal calendar.
- Marissa, you talked about registering students – can you tell us more about keeping school information up-to-date? It sounds like checking the Form I-17 might be a good idea at the start of the new academic year.

### MARISSA:

- Absolutely, keeping the Form I-17 up-to-date is another responsibility for DSOs. I recommend that DSOs check their Form I-17 as part of your back to school routine to confirm that it reflects your school’s current operating status.



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- Remember, certain updates to this form must be reported within 21 days of that change.



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## **Slide 19: Facts + Figures**

### **MODERATOR:**

- Up next, we want to highlight some statistics on how SEVP has worked to enhance customer service through several different channels, including SEVP field representatives, decreases in School Certification Unit backlogs and the SRC.
- Tandice, why don't you kick us off with statistics from our field representatives?



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## **Slide 20: Enhancing Customer Service — Serving Stakeholders**

### **TANDICE:**

- SEVP field representatives provide assistance to DSOs through school visits and conference presentations. As you can see on the slide, they have been pretty busy.
- Since deployment of the first class in May 2014, our field representatives have:
  - Conducted more than 20,000 school visits, and
  - Participated in more than 130 conferences and events.



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## **Slide 21: Enhancing Customer Service — Serving Stakeholders**

### **TANDICE:**

- On this next slide, I also want to highlight the progress that has been made in the School Certification Unit. They have done a great job decreasing backlogs and streamlining their response times.
- In fact, since the beginning of fiscal year 2016, the School Certification Unit made:
  - A 38 percent decrease in backlogged recertification cases, and
  - A 45 percent decrease in backlogged I-17 update requests.

### **MODERATOR:**

- Wow, thanks Tandice – those teams have definitely kept busy to make these improvements.
- So Marissa, we talked about the SEVP Field Representative and School Certification Units — can you share some updates on the SRC?



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## **Slide 22: Enhancing Customer Service — SEVP Response Center**

### **MARISSA:**

- Sure thing, Lauren. The SEVP Response Center is staying busy as well.
- For example, on a monthly basis, the Response Center received on average more than 11,000 calls and 940 emails from stakeholders. That comes out to about 640 calls each business day.
- The graphic on the slide does a great job to show the progress that the Response Center has made over the last few months.



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## **Slide 23: Helpful Resources**

### **MODERATOR:**

- Thanks for sharing those incredible statistics!
- We're getting close to the end of our presentation, but before we wrap it up, I know SEVP has a lot of free resources available to our viewers.
- In this final section we will talk about:
  - New resources available on Study in the States,
  - The Study in the States STEM OPT Hub,
  - How to provide feedback on this presentation, and
  - How to contact SEVP if you need assistance of any kind.
- Marissa, why don't you kick us off?



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## Slide 24: New on Study in the States

### MARISSA:

- Sure thing! We have a couple of planned enhancements coming to some key pages on Study in the States in the next month.
- First, I want to highlight the redesigned Study in the States blog page. This new blog landing page will allow users to filter blogs by audience, category or date published. Additionally, to ensure stakeholders are aware of breaking program news and updates, users will be able to view three featured blog posts at once.
- Next, we'll launch a redesigned SEVIS Help Hub home page, which will allow users to easily navigate through Help Hub content. Users will also be able to view the section of the SEVIS Help Hub they are located in and will be able to navigate to the previous page via a back button feature.

### MODERATOR:

- Great news! It sounds like these updates will make navigation around the site much easier.
- And, as always, for those of you watching – you can access both of these resources through our Hyperlink Appendix.
- Tandice, would you tell us more about the updated STEM OPT Hub?



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## **Slide 25: STEM OPT Hub**

### **TANDICE:**

- Sure thing!
- To start, stakeholders can access the page at the link on your screen, which is also available in the Hyperlink Appendix Lauren has mentioned throughout this presentation.
- This page includes:
  - An overview of the May 2016 regulation implementation;
  - The STEM OPT transition plan;
  - The Form I-983 information and tutorial; and
  - Information for employers, students and DSOs.
- I also want to point out that stakeholders can contact the SRC or their assigned SEVP field representative with questions, too!

### **MODERATOR:**

- All very important resources, for sure – thanks Tandice!
- Marissa, can you share how stakeholders can stay more engaged and connected with SEVP?



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## Slide 26: Engage with SEVP

### MARISSA:

- We've got a lot of great resources available on Study in the States and our social media pages that will allow our stakeholders to stay informed about the latest news coming from SEVP.
- Some specific things that we want to highlight are the quarterly SEVP Spotlight and the monthly Outreach Bulletin.

### MODERATOR:

- And just a quick reminder: how do DSOs receive the Spotlight and Bulletin?

### MARISSA:

- The SEVP Spotlight is posted on Study in the States.
- For the Outreach Bulletin, folks can just send an email to [SEVPOutreach@ice.dhs.gov](mailto:SEVPOutreach@ice.dhs.gov) and we would be happy to add you to our distribution list! There's also a sign-up option on the Study in the States Conferences page where you can simply submit your email and we'll add you to the distribution list.
- Speaking of the Conferences page, you can also submit event requests to SEVP and other government partners on that page if your school, or any associations you are a member of, have upcoming events you would like us to participate in.

### TANDICE:

- And finally, don't forget that we frequently post on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, so be sure to connect with us on those platforms as well!



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## **Slide 27: SEVP Values Your Feedback**

### **MODERATOR:**

- Fantastic! As we near the end of this webinar, I'd like to take this opportunity to remind everyone that we would love to hear your thoughts about today's session, as well as any other events you attend where SEVP presents.
- Remember to take our Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey following this webinar so that we can continue to improve for future webinars!
- If you refer to our Hyperlink Appendix, there's a direct link to the survey in there – it's also on the slide now, too.



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## **Slide 28: SEVP Contact Information**

### **MODERATOR:**

- And finally, don't forget that there are numerous ways to get in touch with SEVP.
- The SRC is open Monday to Friday from 8 am. to 6 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time, except on holidays.

### **TANDICE:**

- Yes and we do want to note that the SRC currently has adjusted hours on Wednesdays for system maintenance.
- For now, the SRC is closed every Wednesday for a short period starting at 12:50 p.m. but resumes operations after 1:30 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time.

### **MODERATOR:**

- Thanks for that reminder, Tandice!
- And just another reminder to our viewers: you can always reach out to us via the email addresses you see on the screen.
- Well, I believe that just about covers it. Marissa and Tandice – thank you for enlightening us today, and everyone else – thank you for joining us.
- Don't forget to tune in to the SEVIS Webinar about the Form I-17 this Friday, August 12. Remember to register for this webinar! You can find additional information in the SEVIS Help Hub.
- Have a great day!