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DIRECTOR'S CORNER

SEVP's Commitment to Transparency



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

As the director of the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP), I believe it is important we are transparent about the decisions the program makes and how those decisions are made. Sharing information about how SEVP develops its policies and procedures helps SEVP more effectively fulfill its national security mission.

This commitment to transparency led us to create an exciting new tool on Study in the States. In February, we launched the [School Appeal Status Tracker](#), which allows schools who have filed an appeal to better understand the process and track their progression through that process.

In many cases, schools have the right to file an appeal if they receive a notice of denial or withdrawal from SEVP. Filing an appeal means the school requests an independent body to review their case to ensure that

regulations were properly applied. Sometimes the process can be lengthy and complicated, so this tool is part of a larger effort to help our stakeholders better understand how SEVP makes these important decisions. For a detailed breakdown of the appeals process, please download and refer to the [SEVP General Appeals Process Information](#) PDF that is available on Study in the States. There is also detailed information about [filing an appeal](#), including [answers to frequently asked questions](#), on ICE.gov.

When a school files an appeal, SEVP sends that school an acknowledgement that it received the request. In this email, the individual who filed the appeal will also receive a unique tracking number. The individual can input this tracking number into the School Appeal Status Tracker on Study in the States to see the status of the school's appeal.

The tracker will display the specific step of the appeal process the school is in and how long that step typically takes to complete. Within the tracker, users can also access other information about the process, including an overview of each step, average

timelines for each step and contact information for further assistance.

Please keep in mind that SEVP processes appeals in the order in which they are received. SEVP treats each appeal with the same thorough review to ensure that a school's specific situation is given maximum consideration and strives to complete each review in the timeliest manner possible. However, processing times are dependent on the volume of cases received and vary based on the complexity of each case. Because of the nuances of each school's situation, SEVP is unable to provide schools with an exact timeline of when it will issue a final decision on specific cases.

The School Appeal Status Tracker aligns with SEVP's goal to increase transparency and provide clear information to its stakeholders. As we are constantly looking for new, innovative ways to effectively fulfill our mission, SEVP welcomes suggestions from the academic community. As always, we appreciate your feedback, patience and support.

Take care,
Lou



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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Subscribe today by visiting [SEVP's GovDelivery sign-up page](#) or using the "Stay Connected" form on the right sidebar of [ICE.gov/SEVP](#).

Statement on Sensitive Locations

As a reminder to our stakeholders, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has a policy in place that advises against enforcement actions at schools or churches. With that said, Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) personnel often visit SEVP-certified schools or those seeking SEVP certification. Many of these visits are required in order to maintain a school's SEVP certification.

ICE STATEMENT ON SENSITIVE LOCATIONS

The ICE sensitive locations policy, which remains in effect, provides that enforcement actions at sensitive locations should generally be avoided, and require either prior approval from an appropriate supervisory official or exigent circumstances necessitating immediate action. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is committed to ensuring that people seeking to participate in activities or utilize services provided at any sensitive location are free to do so without fear or hesitation.

In order for schools to enroll nonimmigrant international F and M students, which many educational institutions do, federal law requires that the schools must be certified by SEVP. Federal law also requires SEVP to continuously monitor schools and nonimmigrant F and M students by collecting data and by conducting site visits. Accordingly,

schools that fail to comply with these requirements may be deemed ineligible to enroll foreign students or their existing certification to enroll nonimmigrant F or M visa students may be withdrawn, as appropriate.

WHEN WILL ICE VISIT YOUR SCHOOL?

SEVP field representatives visit schools as part of their daily duties. They enhance national security by serving as direct day-to-day liaisons between SEVP and schools certified by SEVP to enroll F or M nonimmigrant students. They may also conduct site visits when a school is applying for SEVP certification or recertification. Field representative visits are planned in conjunction with school officials. Field representatives do not engage with the nonimmigrant student population. Please visit DHS's [Study in the States](#) for more information about SEVP field representatives.

ICE's Homeland Security Investigations special agents or personnel from SEVP's compliance section may make unannounced site visits to schools to ensure the school is complying with federal laws and regulations governing F and M nonimmigrant students. If a school wants to continue its SEVP certification, it cannot decline these visits.

FRU UPDATE

International Student Athlete Q&A

For this issue of the SEVP Spotlight, we asked Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) Field Representative Meghan Lane how she helps schools better manage their international student athletes. Ms. Lane serves schools in SEVP Field Representative Territory 40, which extends through Florida's Gulf Coast. Before joining SEVP, Ms. Lane supported international student athletes as a designated school official (DSO) and had the pleasure of seeing some of her students go on to win medals in their respective sports at several Olympics.

DO MANY OF THE SCHOOLS YOU SERVE HAVE LARGE PERCENTAGES OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ATHLETES?

Florida has great weather for golf, tennis and other sports, all year round! I have several private kindergarten through grade 12 (K-12) schools here in SEVP Field Representative Territory 40 where nearly 100 percent of the students are athletes. For example, at private K-12 boarding schools like IMG Academy, 380 out of the school's total 384 F-1 student population are athletes.

By contrast at places like Florida State University, approximately three-quarters of their international students are graduate students who typically do not participate in the school's varsity athletic programs. However, Florida State University hosts 89 undergraduate student athletes, which constitutes about 20 percent of its undergraduate international student population.

WHAT TENDS TO BE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE DSOs FACE WHEN MANAGING INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ATHLETES?

Some say that "timing is everything," and this is also true when it comes to F-1 student athletes. Because of the inconsistent timing of sports seasons across the globe, it can be difficult to coordinate students' athletic schedules with their academic calendar. These scheduling conflicts mean that sometimes students arrive late for new student orientations or must jump right into their athletic training schedule without having much time to acclimate to their new surroundings.

To help students better adjust, it's important for DSOs to know the academic advisors, trainers, coaches and counselors who will also be working with the student athletes. DSOs may also have to take extra time to do a special orientation or document check to verify that the new F-1 student athletes understand what actions they need to take, in addition to their student athlete responsibilities, to maintain legal status.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE UNIQUE CHALLENGES INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ATHLETES FACE AND HOW CAN DSOs HELP PREPARE THEM TO SUCCESSFULLY MAINTAIN THEIR STUDENT STATUS WHILE PARTICIPATING IN SPORTS?

International student athletes face many challenges. Sometimes it's easy for student athletes to lose track of the fact that maintaining F-1 status comes first while in school.

Not only do they have to meet their rigorous academic requirements, student athletes also have intense training, practice and travel schedules that may eat into their study, sleep, eating and socializing time. They must be personally disciplined and good time managers. This means they may have limited opportunities to make friends outside of the classroom or team and may not get to have the same cultural experiences as other international students. As a result, it's important they have a good relationship with their coaches and their DSOs.

As I said above, it is vital that DSOs managing international student athletes build good relationships and clear communication channels with the athletic departments at their schools, including the coaches who oversee the students' athletic schedules. International student athletes may not proactively seek out their DSOs because they presume their coach will take care of everything for them. If the DSOs and the coaches have a good working relationship, the coach can more easily direct the student to their DSO at the appropriate times.

CONTACT US

SEVP Contacts

The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) is dedicated to maintaining open communication with international students and academic officials. SEVP has multiple contact options:

Our offices are open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. ET, except holidays

Phone: 703-603-3400
Email: SEVP@ice.dhs.gov

Find us on the web:
www.ice.gov/sevp
<http://studyinthestates.dhs.gov>

Follow us on Twitter [@StudyinStates](https://twitter.com/StudyinStates)
Like Study in the States on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/StudyinStates)
Follow SEVP on [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/studyinthestates)

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 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. ET or email 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

To report exploitation of student visa programs, contact your local HSI special agent by calling 1-866-DHS-2ICE (1-866-347-2423) or visit www.ice.gov.