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Volume 7, Issue 3

1

Director's Corner

2

FRU Update
SEVIS Fee Update

3

CTCEU Update
Program Reminder

4

What's New on
Study in the States
K-12 Best Practices
Contact Us

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

New SEVIS Functionality Helps Streamline Filing for Recertification

School officials at Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP)-certified schools play a vital role in strengthening our national security. Your help in complying with record keeping, retention and reporting requirements ensures that SEVP and our government partners receive the information needed to monitor more than one million international students studying in the United States.

As you know, SEVP requires that schools file for recertification every two years. Recertification allows SEVP to regularly verify that institutions remain eligible for certification and comply with the federal rules and regulations that govern enrolling F and M students. Because this process is integral to SEVP's national security mission, we strive to constantly improve and streamline it. The more efficient our information gathering is, the better SEVP can fulfill its mission.

This past July, SEVP deployed Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) Release 6.35, which allows principal designated school officials (PDSOs) to submit Form I-17, "Petition for Approval of School

for Attendance by Nonimmigrant Student," updates when filing for recertification. Before this deployment, schools had to file these through the updates process prior to submitting for recertification.

However, substantial changes such as updates to a school's ownership or location must still be made through the existing process for SEVP to adjudicate them. If a PDSO attempts to update either of these fields while filing for recertification, SEVP will reject their submission for recertification and direct them to file an update.

If a school updates their Form I-17 during recertification, they must also submit the necessary evidence needed to adjudicate the changes. The evidence a school must submit varies depending on the update being made and the school's accreditation status. Please refer to the evidence guides in the Schools section of the ICE.gov/SEVP website under the updates tab for detailed instructions on what SEVP requires to adjudicate changes.

Keep in mind that a school's Form I-17 must always reflect its current operating status and federal regulations require that

all material changes to the Form I-17 are made within 21 days of the change. It is in the school's best interest to regularly review and update their Form I-17.

SEVIS Release 6.35 is just one piece of SEVP's larger effort to improve the school certification life cycle. In August, SEVP's School Certification Unit hosted a [live webinar](#) to address questions and concerns regarding the Form I-17. The webinar was our most popular event to date, with more than 700 stakeholders tuning in to better understand how to properly maintain their school's Form I-17. If you missed this webinar, watch it on [Study in the States](#) and print the event's frequently asked questions document for your own reference.

SEVP will continue to collect and monitor stakeholder feedback concerning the Form I-17. We welcome your suggestions to help us further improve the process. We look to you, the academic community, to ensure that the nonimmigrant information the federal government receives is accurate and complete.

Thanks for your continued support,
Rachel Canty



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

Q&A: Surge Capacity Force Training Exercise

In the wake of Hurricane Harvey, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) deployed its Surge Capacity Force (SCF) in late August 2017. Nine SEVP field representatives are SCF volunteers and, as part of this deployment, will spend 45 days in Denton, Texas helping Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Harvey relief efforts. All DHS SCF volunteers go through a rigorous training prior to deployment. We spoke with Ms. Montsé Garcia (Territory 17) after she attended her SCF training in emergency response and preparedness which prepared her to serve in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey.

WHAT IS SURGE CAPACITY FORCE?

The Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006 empowers the Secretary of Homeland Security to accept DHS employees, like myself, as volunteers for the interagency SCF. This volunteer force is deployed in disasters of extraordinary scale such as Hurricane Harvey or other large-scale responses where FEMA's workforce capacity is exceeded. SCF is currently comprised of more than 6,000 volunteers from across the nation and serving in agencies ranging from the U.S. Secret Service to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

To ensure SCF is ready when needed, like in the case of Hurricane Harvey, FEMA provides training in advance of such natural disasters. The training exercise taught me how to assist individuals in need during major emergencies and support DHS's mission of protecting the American homeland. My fellow field representative, Kimberly Large (Territory 15, Arizona), is also a SCF volunteer and attended this exercise with me.

WHAT WAS THE TRAINING EXPERIENCE LIKE?

I received deployment orders on a Friday with a report date of Monday at a federal training and staging location. The training began with an emergency event simulation. Our simulated disaster was a 9.8 magnitude earthquake in the Pacific Northwest, with a high tsunami following quickly behind that devastated the West Coast. After the simulated

disaster hit, the rest of the week we responded to four primary areas of service:

- Logistics—the storage and movement of critical recovery and response materials.
- Community Relations—outreach to the public about available assistance programs.
- Individual Assistance—providing aid to survivors.
- Public Assistance—working with local business and other local/federal agencies to facilitate aid.

HOW DOES THIS TRAINING RELATE TO YOUR ROLE AS AN SEVP FIELD REPRESENTATIVE?

As a field representative for Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP), I routinely engage the academic community, other federal agencies, and individual stakeholders in navigating the complex world of federal nonimmigrant regulations. This usually means breaking down complex language and varied federal resources into comprehensible steps and providing practical guidance.

As an SCF volunteer, I will be called upon, like in the case of Hurricane Harvey, to perform similar functions for FEMA, DHS, and the broader public by helping survivors navigate the different disaster assistance programs available to them, and coordinating aid with FEMA components, local businesses, and other federal, state or local agencies. In addition to serving in SCF, I am also a member of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Rapid Response Team and FEMA's Community Emergency Response Team, both of which provide on the ground assistance in natural disasters.

When disasters like Hurricane Harvey strike and DHS deploys SCF, I believe my experience as a SEVP field representative, and the skillset learned through this role, will be useful to empower survivors and hopefully make the steps to recovery feel manageable.

SEVIS FEE UPDATE

Transfer SEVIS Fees on FMJFee.com

As of June 2017, international students may now request to transfer their I-901 SEVIS Fee directly from FMJFee.com.

An I-901 SEVIS Fee transfer request typically occurs if a student in Initial status in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) has not yet attended school and decides to transfer to another Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP)-certified school or

program. If accepted, the transfer would allow the student to move the I-901 SEVIS Fee from one SEVIS ID number to another.

For more information about how to transfer an I-901 SEVIS Fee on FMJFee.com, please read the Study in the States blog post entitled, "[Students: SEVP Now Accepts Online I-901 SEVIS Fee Transfer Requests.](#)"

Project Campus Sentinel Builds Relationships with the Academic Community

The Counterterrorism and Criminal Exploitation Unit (CTCEU) is a part of Homeland Security Investigations' (HSI) National Security Investigations Division, which investigates nonimmigrant visa holders who violate their immigration status and places the highest priority on combating the criminal exploitation of the student visa system. CTCEU works closely with the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) to proactively identify and prevent exploitation at the school and student levels.

In 2011, CTCEU launched Project Campus Sentinel (PCS), an initiative that enhances outreach to the academic community to help prevent school fraud and visa exploitation by providing a link between HSI special agents and SEVP-certified institutions. Since the program's inception, HSI special agents have conducted nearly 3,000 PCS visits throughout the United States, with more than 300 visits completed during fiscal year 2017.

This fall, agents will distribute new trifold brochures during PCS visits that provide more information about the program. It is important for designated school officials (DSOs) to understand that PCS visits are separate and distinct from SEVP field representative visits. While SEVP field representatives meet with DSOs to ensure understanding of and adherence to rules governing SEVP certification, PCS visits seek to:

- Increase DSOs' knowledge of how regulatory requirements play into criminal investigations.

- Seek DSOs' assistance in conducting investigations of noncompliant schools and students.
- Collaboratively prevent possible threats to national security by identifying individuals who present a risk within a school's F and M student population.
- Provide DSOs with access to law enforcement resources and an outlet to report possible national security threats.

By building a mutual partnership and providing opportunity for direct, open communication between DSOs and local HSI special agents, PCS addresses inherent national security vulnerabilities and equips DSOs with information that may help them better detect compliance problems.

To this end, HSI also assigns special agents to the SEVP Analysis and Operations Center (SAOC) on long-term details. These special agents serve as an additional outlet for DSOs to contact law enforcement. In turn, the agents can work with SAOC to evaluate the information provided and put DSOs in contact with the appropriate local law enforcement officials.

If you need to share information about potentially fraudulent schools or individuals who have violated their immigration status, email CTCEU at CTCEU@ice.dhs.gov and for additional information about PCS, visit the [CTCEU section of ICE.gov](#).

PROGRAM REMINDER

SEVP Can Speak to a School's Attorney Only After Receiving a Form G-28

Does your school want an attorney to discuss issues relating to your certification status with the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP)? If so, the school must complete, sign and submit a [Form G-28, "Notice of Entry of Appearance as Attorney or Accredited Representative,"](#) to SEVP.

More information about this form and when a school may wish to use it is below.

WHAT IS A FORM G-28?

The Form G-28 is the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's form through which attorneys provide information to establish their eligibility to appear for and act on behalf of an applicant, petitioner, requestor or respondent in matters before the agency.

WHEN DOES A SCHOOL TYPICALLY SUBMIT A FORM G-28?

Often, a school submits a Form G-28 when filing an appeal or motion or after SEVP:

- Issues a Notice of Intent to Withdraw a school's SEVP certification.
- Issues a Notice of Intent to Deny Recertification to a school.
- Issues any other notice to a certified or petitioning school.

If a school decides to designate an attorney to act or speak with SEVP on its behalf, the Form G-28 must be submitted with a school's motion, appeal or other responses to SEVP. For more information about how to file a motion or an appeal, visit [ICE.gov/SEVP](#).

A school may also file a Form G-28 whenever a school wants SEVP to discuss its Form I-17, "Petition for Approval of School for Attendance by Nonimmigrant Student," petition or school certification status with an attorney. Remember, unless a Form G-28 is filed, SEVP may only speak with principal designated school officials (PDSOs), designated school officials (DSOs), and individuals listed on the Form I-17 (or pending PDSOs and DSOs, in the case of initial certification only) about a school's initial certification, petition

updates, recertification or any matter pertaining to an institution's SEVP certification.

WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE FORM G-28?

For more information about the [Form G-28](#), including [instructions](#) on how to complete the form, [visit USCIS' website](#). You can also find more details about how to file a motion or appeal and an [overview](#) of the appeal process on [ICE.gov/SEVP](#) and [Study in the States](#).

WHAT'S NEW ON STUDY IN THE STATES

Visit the Redesigned Tools Page

In August, Study in the States launched a redesigned [Tools page](#), which includes an easy to navigate format and updated look and feel. Each tool now features a preview description of its functionality and purpose.

Additionally, Study in the States added a [new widget](#) with content focused for current and prospective international students. The widget is a small web application that you can embed on your website or blog. This widget allows visitors of your website to directly access resources and information for students on Study in the States with just a click of a button.

K-12 BEST PRACTICES

Watch SEVP's Webinars for K-12 Schools

The kindergarten through grade 12 (K-12) international student population is the fastest growing user group in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System. This section of the Spotlight is to help K-12 schools understand how to properly comply with federal regulations and navigate the international student life cycle.

Prepare for the back-to-school season by watching two Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) webinars designed specifically

for designated school officials at K-12 schools:

- [SEVP Ask the Experts Webinar: K-12 Spotlight](#).
- [SEVP Ask the Experts Follow-up Webinar: K-12 Live Question and Answer Session](#).

Remember to download and save the [Top 10 Questions from K-12 DSOs](#) and refer to it as you welcome incoming students.

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](#)
Like Study in the States on [Facebook](#)
Follow SEVP on [LinkedIn](#)

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

ICE CONTACTS

To report national vulnerabilities or national security concerns, contact ICE's Counterterrorism and Criminal Exploitation Unit at CTCEU@ice.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.

Disclaimer: The information presented in the SEVP Spotlight is provided for informational purposes only and should not be considered legal advice.