

SEVP Spotlight

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DIRECTOR'S CORNER



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

Accreditation and Recognition Conversion Project Success

As a follow-up to the broadcast message you received on Aug. 27, I extend my great appreciation to the principal designated school officials and designated school officials at U.S. educational programs for their efforts to convert their school accreditation information into the new data format in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS).

The SEVIS Form I-17 Accreditation and Recognition Conversion Project was a key part of the April 18 deployment of SEVIS Release 6.16. The project enabled school officials to provide more complete accreditation and recognition data within SEVIS. This additional information helps SEVP in certifying schools, and mitigates potential national security issues. The opportunity to provide information via the Accreditation and Recognition Conversion Project closed on July 18.

- Total SEVP-certified schools: 8,991.
- Ninety-one percent of schools converted by the deadline: 8,165.
- Nine percent of schools did not convert by the deadline.
 - ▷ However, of those nine percent, only two percent have F-1 or M-1 students actively enrolled.

This high response rate illustrates your commitment to maintain data integrity in SEVIS, for which SEVP is grateful. Your support made the conversion project a success and aids SEVP in fulfilling its national security mission.

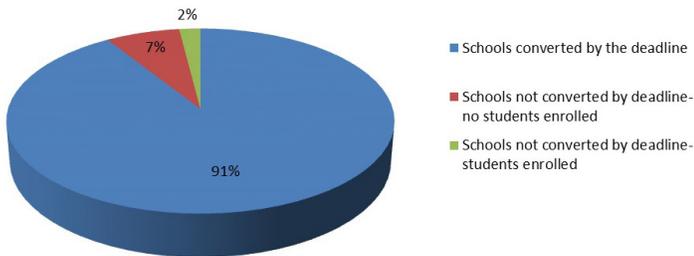
Schools that have not converted their information should update their accreditation and recognition information using the link for the Form I-17, "Petition for Approval for Attendance by Nonimmigrant Students," on the SEVIS School Information page. SEVP will be contacting schools that failed to update their information by the July 18 deadline.

As the Fall/Winter conference season is underway, I would also like to shed light on why SEVP officials cannot participate in-person at conferences. Currently, SEVP — like many other government programs — remains under travel restrictions, which has prompted the program to virtually engage with stakeholders at conferences and other outreach events. Additionally, many subject matter experts that would physically attend these events are processing pending school items in Washington, D.C., further limiting our staff's ability to travel. SEVP is committed to expanding our virtual capabilities and continuing to provide digital alternatives to engage with stakeholders in the post-sequestration environment.

As always, I greatly appreciate all that you do for SEVP, international students and the integrity of the academic system.

Take care,
Lou

SEVP-Certified Schools
Conversion of Accreditations and Recognitions



8,991 SEVP-Certified Schools



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

Fall/Winter 2014-2015 Conference Season

The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) is dedicated to keeping our stakeholders informed on important updates related to the program. A recording of [SEVP's Fall/Winter 2014-2015 Conference Presentation](#) is now available on the Study in the States [Conferences and Outreach](#) page. If you are unable to attend a conference this season, you can watch the recorded presentation to keep up to date with the latest SEVP news.

This season's presentation addresses key themes of interest to our stakeholders, including customer service, stakeholder engagement and intergovernmental coordination. The presentation discusses:

- Improved customer service offered through the SEVP Field Representative Unit and upcoming SEVP Response Center/SEVIS Help Desk merge;
- Collaboration with SEVP's interagency

partners;

- Opportunities for stakeholder engagement, including enhanced Study in the States features and draft guidance for comment;
- Upcoming SEVP draft, interim and final guidance, as well as regulatory updates;
- Key updates on student and school issues, as well as best practices for school officials; and
- Enhanced Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) functionality.

We encourage you to provide your feedback on the Fall/Winter 2014-2015 Conference Presentation, as well as any other SEVP-hosted or attended event through the [Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey](#). SEVP reviews all stakeholder feedback and uses your comments to help drive presentation topics and content posted to Study in the States.

Additionally, you can stay up-to-date on the latest SEVP conferences and outreach news and events by subscribing to the monthly SEVP Conference Bulletin. To subscribe, send an email to SEVPCommunications@ice.dhs.gov with your request. The bulletin is also available for download on the [Conferences and Outreach](#) page.

For general SEVP news and updates, be sure to follow us on Twitter (@StudyinStates) and like us on Facebook!

CTCEU UPDATE

Importance of the Form I-20

When an international student is accepted into a Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) certified school, the designated school official (DSO) must issue them a Form I-20, "Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status." A student must have this form to apply for a student visa, enter the United States and apply for benefits.

A principal designated school official (PDSO) or the DSO signs and certifies the Form I-20. By signing the Form, the P/DSO certifies that:

- The information on the Form I-20 is correct;
- The signature was executed after review and evaluation of the student's application in the U.S.;
- The student's qualifications meet all the standards for admission to the school; and
- They are the school official authorized to issue the form.

It is important that a DSO report accurate information on the Form I-20, as it directly impacts the integrity of the student visa system. Information reflected on the Form I-20 generates student records in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS); thus P/DSOs must understand and agree to the terms and conditions of its usage and not falsify facts in this government database.

Title 8 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Section 214.3(k) outlines the responsibilities of the DSO listed on the Form I-20 and further emphasizes this certification. The definition of PDSO or DSO is a "regularly

employed member of the school administration, whose office is located at the school and whose compensation does not come from commissions for recruitment of foreign students." Failing to comply with this regulation can result in the withdrawal of certification for the school to enroll international students.

DSOs have a responsibility to maintain accurate records to protect the legitimacy of the student visa system. For more information on DSO responsibilities as they relate to the Form I-20, visit [Study in the States](#) and search "Form I-20" in the top right search bar.



SEVP Draft Policy Guidance

The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) periodically requests comments from stakeholders on draft and interim final guidance. Guidance is SEVP's interpretation of federal laws and regulations that guide SEVP adjudicators in their decision-making. Recently, the public provided comments on draft guidance that impact SEVP-certified schools and F and M international students. The feedback was incorporated into the latest iteration of the guidance. Updated guidance documents address the following issues:

Schools

- Two updated fact sheets outline pathway programs processes. Also known as bridge programs, pathway programs help students who do not meet admission requirements for a degree program to enroll at a U.S. school. Once a pathway program is completed, a student can obtain admission into a degree program. The updated fact sheets answer questions related to pathway programs, conditional admission and Form I 20, "Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status," issuance.
- Review of regulations for English proficiency requirements — this factor is dependent on whether English proficiency is a standard of admission to a school.

Students

- Students who leave the United States must return within five months of departure to maintain their non-immigrant status. Updates to guidance outlining the statutes and regulations regarding F-1 and M-1 student absences are in conjunction with regulations for F 1 student annual vacation, as well as a clarified definition of a full academic year.
- By the end of the calendar year, SEVP will post employment-related guidance for F 1 students who seek off and on-campus employment, or an internship with an international organization.
- F-1 students who are subject to severe economic hardships due to emergent circumstances will also have revised guidance by the end of 2014.
- In summer 2015, SEVP will post updated guidance regarding F 1 optional practical training, F-1 general employment, and F-1 student information regulations on recordkeeping and reporting through the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System.

To learn more about upcoming SEVP guidance, visit [SEVP's guidance page](#) on Study in the States.

ICE and Study in the States Launch New Site Features

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) recently unveiled a redesigned version of ICE.gov, which is specially formatted for desktops, tablets and smartphones.

While the look and feel of [ICE.gov](#) differs from the previous version, users will still be able to access Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) information. You can still find answers to frequently asked questions, regulation information, broadcast messages and Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) updates on the redesigned site.

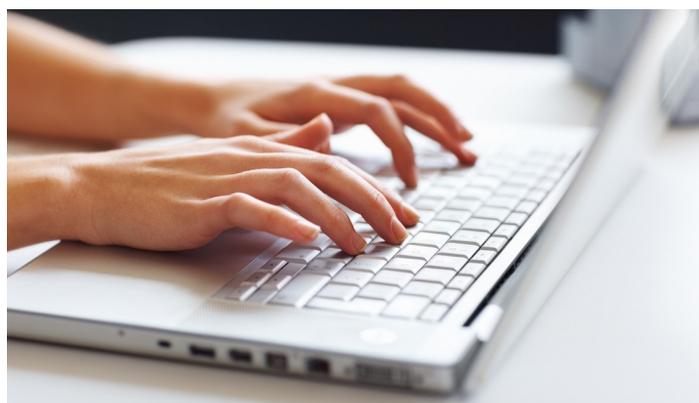
First, website visitors may notice revisions to navigation and design on the SEVP landing page. To make the site more easily viewable on smartphones and tablets, you will find condensed site navigation. All features, including the most visited SEVP topics, are included within three horizontal tabs that are visible on the left-hand corner of any SEVP-related Web page. High-level topics like schools, students, SEVIS and more are also accessible through links in the related content column and on the SEVP landing page.

SEVP also launched a new Web page on [Study in the States](#) dedicated to explaining the appeals and motions process to schools. On this page, schools can get answers to questions, such as:

- What is the difference between an appeal and motion?
- How long do I have to file an appeal or motion?
- Where can I find more information regarding appeals and motions?

In conjunction with the new appeals and motions Web pages, SEVP updated frequently asked questions on ICE.gov. We hope these updates increase stakeholders' access to SEVP information and better educate our stakeholders on the appeals process. To date, almost 200 visitors have reviewed the appeals and motions information on Study in the States. SEVP also shared this information on Twitter and Facebook to encourage readers to visit the new page.

SEVP will continue to implement site improvements to present information in a clearer, more concise manner.



Reminders During Student Holiday Travel



With the upcoming holiday season, it is important that school officials remind students to travel with their important documents. Students who travel back to their home country are responsible for carrying documents that are necessary for re-entry into the United States. To avoid any issues with U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers at ports of entry, it is important for students to hand-carry the following documents:

- A valid passport;
- A signed Form I-20, "Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Status;"
- Financial support documents, which are typically the same as those provided during the original visa interview with the U.S. Department of State;

- An acceptance letter or recent tuition payment receipt; and
- A designated school official's name and contact information.

If any information cannot be verified, the student may be directed to go through a secondary inspection for supplemental CBP research. If further verification is necessary after a secondary inspection, CBP officers may issue the student a Form I-515A, "Notice to Student or Exchange Visitor." This means the student has 30 days to submit missing information to the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP).

To ensure a safe and easy return to the United States, students should keep all necessary documents with them at all times. For more holiday travel tips, visit [Study in the States](#).

CONTACT US

SEVP Contacts

The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) is dedicated to maintaining open communication with international students and academic officials to provide the necessary support while studying in the United States. SEVP has multiple contact options:

Our offices are open Monday through Friday, 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time, except holidays

Phone: 703-603-3400

E-mail: SEVP@ice.dhs.gov

Find us on the Web:

www.ice.gov/sevis

<http://studyinthestates.dhs.gov>

Follow us on Twitter @StudyinStates

Like Study in the States on Facebook

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 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time 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** or call 1-866-DHS-2ICE (1-866-347-2423) or visit www.ice.gov