

July 10, 2020

The Honorable Chad Wolf  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Office of the Secretary  
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Acting Secretary Wolf,

On behalf of the American Council on Education (ACE) and the undersigned associations, we write to oppose in the strongest possible terms the July 6 directive (Number 2007-01) issued by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) regarding international students and the upcoming 2020-21 academic year.<sup>1</sup> We ask that you withdraw this guidance as soon as possible, and grant needed flexibility for our international students and institutions during the global pandemic.

Given the great uncertainty and multiple challenges facing our institutions and our students for the fall 2020 semester, the guidance is deeply troubling and misguided, causing great concern on campuses across the country. Colleges and universities would like to reopen in the fall in as safe a manner as possible. But no one size fits all. As a result, colleges and universities have announced and continue to announce multi-faceted, nuanced models for reopening campuses this fall. Some are proceeding with online learning only, others intend to be primarily in-person, and many others have a range of plans for hybrid models. Regrettably, this guidance will undermine those efforts, creating confusion and complexity for our institutions and international students, rather than certainty and clarity.

For example, the guidance requires institutions to inform ICE by July 15 if programs of study will be online-only for the fall. This is an incredibly short time for institutions to make a decision of that magnitude, which under this guidance will negatively impact all of their international students. But let us be clear: the issue is that the entire premise of this guidance is wrong.

At a time when institutions are doing everything they can to help reopen our country, we need flexibility, not iron-clad federal rules that are a big step in the wrong direction. ICE should allow any international student with a valid visa to continue their education regardless of whether a student is receiving his or her education online, in person, or through a combination of both, whether inside or outside the United States, during this unprecedented global health crisis.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/bcm2007-01.pdf>