



September 8, 2025

The Honorable Marco Rubio  
Office of the Secretary  
U.S. Department of State  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Rubio:

On behalf of the American Council on Education and the undersigned higher education associations, we write to ask that the administration exempt nonimmigrant visas, including F, J, and M student visas, for those countries included under the June 4, 2025, Presidential Proclamation “Restricting the Entry of Foreign Nationals to Protect the United States from Foreign Terrorists and other National Security and Public Safety Threats”<sup>1</sup> and any future travel bans offered by the administration.

In 2017, Presidential Proclamation 9645 “Enhanced Vetting Capabilities and Processes for Detecting Attempted Entry into the United States by Terrorists or other Public-Safety Threats”<sup>2</sup> operated as a “travel ban” blocking entry to the United States by foreign nationals of specific countries identified as threats. However, nonimmigrants from the countries included in the proclamation, which was in place until 2021, were exempted. In 2017, the proclamation noted: “These restrictions distinguish between the entry of immigrants and nonimmigrants. Persons admitted on immigrant visas become lawful permanent residents of the United States. Such persons may present national security or public-safety concerns that may be distinct from those admitted as nonimmigrants.”<sup>3</sup>

The June 2025 proclamation requires the Secretary of State, in consultation with the Attorney General, the Secretary of Homeland Security, and the Director of National Intelligence, to assess and recommend whether any suspensions and limitations included in the proclamation should be “continued, terminated, modified, or supplemented” within 90 days of the proclamation, with reviews every 180 days. We ask that when this 90-day review happens, the administration exempt nonimmigrant F, J, and M visas for several reasons.

As you know, international students coming to the United States to study under F, J, or M visas receive a thorough vetting through an application process, interview, and additional screening,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/06/restricting-the-entry-of-foreign-nationals-to-protect-the-united-states-from-foreign-terrorists-and-other-national-security-and-public-safety-threats/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2017/09/27/2017-20899/enhancing-vetting-capabilities-and-processes-for-detecting-attempted-entry-into-the-united-states-by>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, Section (ii)

such as a review of social media.<sup>4</sup> Recently, the Department of State implemented a new policy that now requires, without exception, every applicant to undergo additional screening for security concerns by consular officers before a visa can be issued.<sup>5</sup> In addition, once they are in the United States, international students are tracked throughout their time through the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). This level of vetting provides State and DHS considerable discretion over visa issuance and maintenance of status.

In the 2023-2024 academic year, more than 1 million international students chose to study in the United States, resulting in a nationwide economic impact of nearly \$44 billion.<sup>6</sup> A recent survey by NAFSA: Association of International Educators found that new international enrollment may fall by as much as 40 percent, with an overall \$7 billion loss to the U.S. economy.<sup>7</sup> Beyond the economic impact, these students contribute to the academic and research capabilities of our nation's institutions. In addition to the travel ban, we remain concerned about delays in student visa processing for this academic year, as well as the application of the new social media vetting policy, which may further delay processing. We hope to work with the administration on thoroughly vetting international students in a timely and efficient manner for the 2025-2026 academic year.

Higher education has actively engaged and has long been a partner with the federal government in addressing malign foreign influence and other national security threats targeting our research and education missions. We have worked in cooperation with law enforcement to ensure that institutions are diligent in preparing for and responding to threats while also continuing to protect the beneficial and safe exchange of students and researchers across the globe. Following 9/11, we engaged with the federal government on the creation of the Student and Exchange Visitor Program and have continued to do so in the years since to improve the system. And in 2020, we worked with the Trump administration regarding the application of presidential proclamation 10043 and its impacts on our students from China.

Given the impact of students on the U.S. economy, as well as the existing high level of vetting and additional monitoring of international students, we ask that nonimmigrants on F, J, and M visas be exempted under the June 2025 travel ban. We stand ready to be a resource and partner in welcoming international students to the United States and to our institutions of higher education. We understand and embrace the need to appropriately vet international students and look forward to working with you on these important issues.

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<sup>4</sup> June 18, 2025 U.S. Department of State "Announcement of Expanded Screening and Vetting for Visa Applicants" <https://www.state.gov/releases/office-of-the-spokesperson/2025/06/announcement-of-expanded-screening-and-vetting-for-visa-applicants>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.state.gov/releases/office-of-the-spokesperson/2025/06/announcement-of-expanded-screening-and-vetting-for-visa-applicants/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.nafsa.org/policy-and-advocacy/policy-resources/nafsa-international-student-economic-value-tool-v2>

<sup>7</sup> "Fall 2025 International Student Enrollment Outlook and Economic Impact" <https://www.nafsa.org/fall-2025-international-student-enrollment-outlook-and-economic-impact#:~:text=The%20Findings,more%20than%2060%2C000%20fewer%20jobs.>

Sincerely,



Ted Mitchell, President

On behalf of:

ACPA-College Student Educators International  
American Association of Colleges and Universities  
American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education  
American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers  
American Association of Colleges of Nursing  
American Association of Community Colleges  
American Association of State Colleges and Universities  
American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges  
American Council on Education  
Association of American Medical Colleges  
Association of American Universities  
Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities  
Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges  
Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities  
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities  
Career Education Colleges and Universities  
Complete College America  
Council for Advancement and Support of Education  
Council of Graduate Schools  
Council of Independent Colleges  
EDUCAUSE  
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities  
NAFSA: Association of International Educators  
NASPA-Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education  
National Association for College Admission Counseling  
National Association of Colleges and Employers  
National Association of College and University Business Officers  
National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education  
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities  
The Phi Beta Kappa Society  
Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration  
UPCEA, The Online and Professional Education Association