

SEVP Spotlight

July 2012
Volume 2, Issue 3

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Key Changes at SEVP

DIRECTOR'S CORNER



*A message from
Louis M. Farrell,
Director of ICE's
Student and Exchange
Visitor Program*

Many changes have taken place recently at the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP), some of which affect our stakeholders. I want to provide a report on a few key issues that SEVP is addressing:

Streamlining School Certification

SEVP is aware that recertification has been a long and arduous process. Since the recertification process began last year, SEVP has made several key changes to improve the process. However, additional refinements are necessary to further streamline the recertification process. To that end, SEVP has established an ad hoc working group to review all school certification processes. SEVP will first examine its initial certification process, followed by processes for certification updates and recertification to increase their efficiency and effectiveness.

GAO Completes Audit

Earlier this year, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) conducted an audit of SEVP as a follow-up to the Homeland Security Investigations visa fraud investigation of Tri-Valley University in 2011. The GAO's audit examined both the processes through which SEVP certifies academic institutions and those it uses to monitor compliance of SEVP-certified institutions. For additional information on the advances SEVP is making to address the vulnerabilities identified by the audit, read the "SEVP Focuses on Improving Program Efficiencies" article on page 3 of this newsletter.



Both the audit and draft report are now complete; the GAO will publicly release the final audit findings and report in July 2012. SEVP is aware of many of the issues raised in the report and, in fact, already had begun addressing several of these issues before the audit. Review the final GAO report by visiting the GAO website.

Staff Transitions

I am saddened to announce the departures of two key SEVP team members. Dianne Currie, chief of the School Certification Unit (SCU), has left federal service. Dianne was with SEVP since its formation and has been a mainstay in the school certification process while supporting other key areas of SEVP's mission. She is a strong leader and a role model for other staff members. Dianne is one of the most respected people I have had the pleasure of working with in my 42-year career.

Vanessa Simmons, another key member supporting the school recertification process within the SCU, has left SEVP for a new federal

position. Vanessa's work with the recertification process was tremendous in ensuring schools are within SEVP compliance. SEVP will miss her.

On behalf of everyone at SEVP, I wish these two fine public servants success in their future endeavors.

While change is constant, SEVP is steadfast in its commitment to its task: maintaining the integrity of the student visa system and serving the needs of our stakeholders. On behalf of SEVP, I sincerely thank all of you for your continued dedication and support to the F and M nonimmigrant education mission.

Take care,
Lou



**U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement**

Study in the States Boosts Social Media Presence



As an online informational hub for F and M students, *Study in the States* is active on its social media pages. Since its launch, more than 100,000 users have visited *Study in the States*, eight percent of which was referral traffic received from social media. *Study in the States* uses Twitter and Facebook to share key information and news with stakeholders on a timely basis.

On Twitter, *Study in the States* has more than 1,000 followers, indicating that users view *Study in the States* as a trusted source for information and news and that these important messages are continually reaching larger audiences. The Facebook account has more than 900 likes.

Other referral traffic to the website has come from the 28 embassies and consulates, including those in Azerbaijan, Cameroon, Canada, Greece, and Sweden, whose websites currently provide direct links to *Study in the States*. More than 200 colleges and universities also offer links through their web presences that send users directly to *Study in the States*.

We look forward to continued engagement with schools, school officials, students, exchange visitors and other stakeholders on these social media platforms.

Join the Conversation

FOLLOW

Study in the States on Twitter
[@StudyinStates](https://twitter.com/StudyinStates)

LIKE

Study in the States on Facebook at
www.facebook.com/StudyintheStates

FRU UPDATE

FRU Hiring in Progress

The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) Field Representative Unit (FRU) is making progress in hiring. Recently, FRU brought on its unit chief, knowledge analyst, fleet manager and the first of the three section chiefs/regional managers. The two remaining section chiefs/regional managers should come on board in the next few months.

SEVP will hire the field representatives (FRs) in groups of 15. In each group, five new hires will come from each of the three regions (eastern,

central and western). This hiring approach will allow training classes to provide individual attention to each student. SEVP expects to announce the positions and territory locations for the initial class by the end of August. Announcements and hiring for the remaining three classes will be in approximately four-month intervals after the first class comes on board.

The job announcements (with specific territory locations) will appear on the USAJOBS.gov website. Prior to posting the announcements,

SEVP will distribute a broadcast message to alert stakeholders that the announcements are pending. Additionally, SEVP will distribute another broadcast message to inform everyone that the job announcements are on USAJOBS.gov, and the dates that the announcements will open.

If you are interested in applying for an FR position, SEVP encourages you to create an account at the USAJOBS.gov website and upload your resume now.

SEVIS II Showcased at NAFSA Conference



The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) participated in the Association of International Educators (NAFSA) National Conference and Expo in Houston, Texas, from May 27 to June 1. SEVP sponsored a booth in the George R. Brown Convention Center where stakeholders could talk directly with SEVP subject matter experts regarding a range of topics.

In addition to the booth, SEVP hosted more than 20 hours of presentations on the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) II in breakout sessions. SEVP also hosted six tutorial stations where stakeholders could participate in “hands-on” SEVIS II demonstrations and experiment with the system’s new functionality. The SEVIS II team captured important feedback

that will help developers make improvements before the launch.

In addition, SEVP’s Field Representative Unit hosted a virtual session where Unit Chief Steve Acton answered stakeholder questions about the hiring and deployment process as well as questions about the overarching mission of the unit. SEVP also participated in hot topic sessions covering the Accreditation of English Language Training Program Act, F and M students and law enforcement issues, and F and M student visa-related topics.

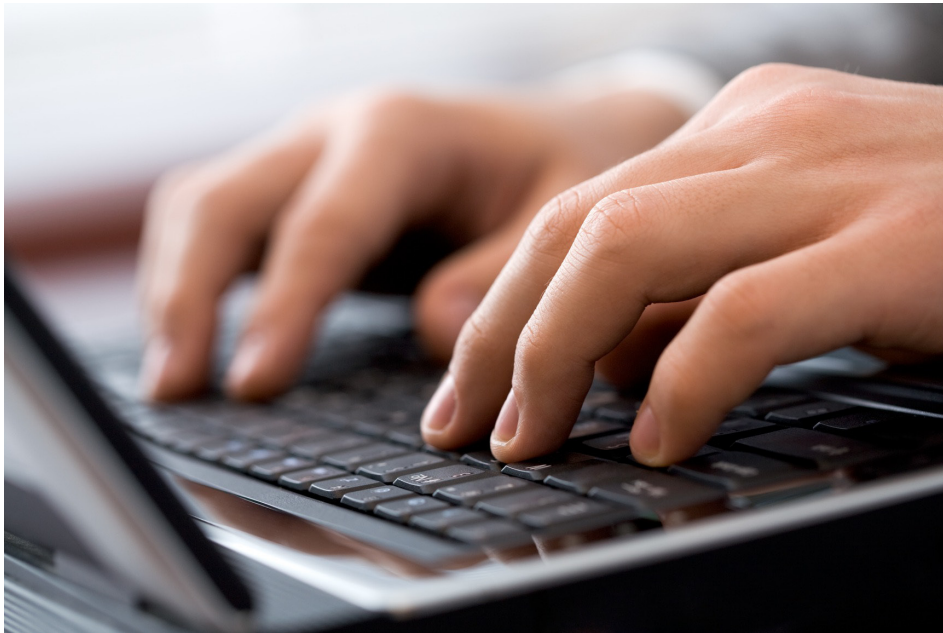
SEVP UPDATE

SEVP Focuses on Improving Program Efficiencies

The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) is working to increase operating efficiency for our stakeholders in the following ways:

- **Developing an adjudicator’s manual.** This manual will provide clear and consistent guidance to adjudicators on evaluation criteria and will clarify the evidence necessary to successfully adjudicate an application. The manual will also address the entire certification process, including the adjudication of initial certification, updates and recertification petitions. Once the manual is complete, it will be available to the public on www.ice.gov/sevis.
- **Decreasing certification petitions processing.** SEVP is focused on reducing processing times in the certification process and addressing our stakeholders’ concerns in a timely fashion by adding additional staff to the School Certification Unit.
- **Identifying “high risk” schools.** By developing and employing a “scorecard” method, SEVP will be able to identify schools that have a high risk profile quickly and to facilitate increased compliance with regulation monitoring.
- **Increased coordination with Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) to address school fraud.** U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) special agents have arrested several designated school officials who were responsible for taking actions on student records that rose to the level of immigration fraud. SEVP’s Analysis and Operations Center continues to work with HSI investigators on these cases to protect national security and the integrity of the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System.

Know Your Students



In 2002, the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) was established to aid the U.S. government in safely admitting and monitoring foreign students. SEVIS records provide information such as address, program of study, and other key student information. While government agencies are constantly working to upgrade systems and policies in order to mitigate potential threats, it is important to national security and public safety that Designated School

Officials (DSOs) assist in this mission. It is vital that DSOs maintain and update each student's SEVIS record properly.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and schools have a shared interest in maintaining SEVIS records and the integrity of foreign student programs. It is important for schools to continuously update the SEVIS records of F and M nonimmigrants with current information in

a timely manner to ensure that students are in compliance with regulations.

It is especially critical to update SEVIS records when F and M students transfer schools, fail to arrive, complete their program, change address, enter or complete circular practical training or optional practical training, or otherwise fail to maintain nonimmigrant status. Accurate and current records are essential to the government's ability to protect schools and communities.

Although not a requirement, it may also be beneficial for DSOs to regularly meet with students in person to recognize the signs of students who may be struggling academically or socially, becoming withdrawn, beginning to act out of character, or exhibiting behavior suggesting radicalization. Since school officials have the most exposure to students, DSO awareness and reporting are critical to preventing any violence or extremism that may threaten respective institutions or student safety.

ICE Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) investigates the criminal exploitation of the student visa system, among other crimes. If you suspect unlawful activity, or notice suspicious behavior, contact your local HSI Special Agent or call 1-866-DHS-2ICE (1-866-347-2423).

Information may also be reported via the HSI Tip Form, which is available at www.ice.gov, or emailed directly to the Counterterrorism and Criminal Exploitation Unit at CTCEU@dhs.gov.

Contact Us

SEVP Contacts

The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) is dedicated to maintaining open communication with international students in an effort to provide 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
Email: SEVP@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@hp.com
- If you are a DSO, RO or ARO with technical issues requiring immediate attention, please email Toolbox.SEVIS@dhs.gov

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 www.ice.gov