



April 26, 2021

The Honorable Chris Coons
Chairman
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations,
and Related Programs
Senate Committee on Appropriations
218 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lindsey Graham
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations,
and Related Programs
Senate Committee on Appropriations
290 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara Lee
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations,
and Related Programs
House Committee on Appropriations
2470 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Hal Rogers
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations,
and Related Programs
House Committee on Appropriations
2406 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Coons, Ranking Member Graham, Chairwoman Lee, and Ranking Member Rogers:

As you begin consideration of Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 appropriations, we urge you to help address alarming and historic declines in international student enrollment, which threatens global exchange, economic recovery, and the United States' sixth largest export. Specifically, we urge you to support increased funding for the U.S. Department of State's Educational and Cultural Exchange Programs in FY 2022 with language directing at least \$50 million for EducationUSA, an increase of \$37 million above FY 2021.

EducationUSA is a Department of State network of over 430 international student advising centers in more than 175 countries and territories. The network promotes the value of higher education at accredited U.S. institutions to students around the world. Given the recent troubling decline in international student enrollment,¹ including a 43 percent drop last fall,² it is imperative that bold investments are made in the program to restore international student enrollment post COVID-19 pandemic.

International students contribute immensely to our nation, enriching the classroom for U.S. students while helping to fulfill key economic, diplomatic, and educational goals. They conduct cutting-edge research that spurs critical innovation and technological advancements necessary to maintain our global competitiveness. In the fight against COVID-19, international students are in U.S. laboratories assisting with the development of vaccines, tests, and therapeutics. Yet, these contributions are at great risk with increasing global competition for talent and the declining attractiveness of the United States as a destination.

¹ <https://opendoorsdata.org/data/international-students/enrollment-trends/>

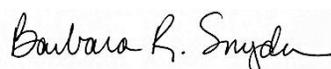
² <https://www.iie.org/en/Research-and-Insights/Publications/Fall-2020-International-Student-Enrollment-Snapshot>

As the United States seeks to build a strong STEM workforce, particularly in industries of the future, we face increasing competition from our counterparts in Europe and Asia who are heavily investing in attracting and retaining the best and brightest international students to develop top talent in STEM. Per the National Science Board's *The State of U.S. Science and Engineering 2020*, temporary visa holders earned one-third (34 percent) of science and engineering doctoral degrees in 2017 and account for "half or more of the doctoral degrees awarded in engineering, mathematics and computer sciences, and economics."³ A Congressional Research Service study also found that international students received 54 percent of master's degrees issued in STEM fields in the U.S. from 2016-2017.⁴ The data on international student participation in academic STEM fields demonstrate a tremendous loss to our STEM workforce if the U.S. does not provide adequate funding to address decreasing enrollment at our nation's colleges and universities. Simply put, without increased funding for EducationUSA to help entice the world's best and bright international students to the United States, we are in danger of losing our position as the world's destination of choice for research and innovation.

According to numerous studies, international students significantly boost the U.S. economy. While they make up only 5.5 percent of students enrolled at U.S. colleges and universities, they contributed \$38.7 billion to our nation's economy through tuition, housing, domestic travel, food, and spending in local communities during the 2019-2020 academic year.⁵ Although \$38.7 billion is impressive, it also signified a loss in revenue of \$1.8 billion from the prior academic year largely due to the pandemic. Given the current economic downturn, ensuring international students choose the United States to further their education should be a clear national and economic priority.

For these reasons, we respectfully request EducationUSA receive at least \$50 million in FY 2022. By investing in the program to attract the world's best and brightest international students to the United States, Congress will maintain our competitive edge and preserve the nation's long-term economic future.

Sincerely,



Barbara R. Snyder
President
Association of American Universities



Esther D. Brimmer
Executive Director and CEO
NAFSA: Association of International Educators



Peter McPherson
President
Association of Public and Land-grant
Universities



Barbara K. Mistick
President
National Association of Independent Colleges
and Universities

³ <https://nces.gov/pubs/nsb20201>

⁴ <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF11347>

⁵ <https://www.nafsa.org/about/about-nafsa/new-nafsa-data-show-first-ever-drop-international-student-economic-value-us>