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September 25, 2020

The Honorable Chad Wolf
Office of the Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20395

William Bratton, Chair
Homeland Security Advisory Council
Department of Homeland Security
DHS Mailstop 0385
2707 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave SE
Washington, DC 20528-0385

Dear Acting Secretary Wolf and Chairman Bratton,

On behalf of the undersigned higher education associations, we write regarding the August 17th memo,¹ which directs the Homeland Security Advisory Council (HSAC) to establish an Academic Subcommittee. Together our associations represent the majority of two- and four-year, private and public colleges. In addition, several of our organizations and members actively served on the previous Homeland Security Academic Advisory Council (HSAAC), which was dissolved in October 2019. Because the new Academic Subcommittee will address critical homeland security issues related to academic institutions, we are offering to act as a resource for HSAC in this important work.

Since its establishment in 2012, HSAAC served as an important forum for discussion of homeland security and immigration issues between leaders of the higher education community and DHS, including issues related to international students, campus emergency preparedness, homeland security-related academic programs and research, faculty exchanges, and the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP). We believe the ongoing opportunity for dialogue and engagement between DHS and the higher education community about pressing issues of common concern is of enormous value, and we are hopeful that this new academic subcommittee will offer similar opportunities.

We are mindful of recent heightened security concerns regarding international students. We strongly believe that international students and scholars contribute much to our

¹ August 17, 2020 memo from Acting Secretary Chad Wolf to HSAC Chairman William Bratton: https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/hsac_signed_tasking_memo_academic_subcommittee_08.17.20_508.pdf

country, while at the same time we are anxious to do our part to ensure that America's security is protected. The higher education community has engaged with DHS on important issues dating back to September 11 and the establishment of the SEVP. In the past few years, given the increasing focus on undue foreign influence and interference in education and research, we have engaged with the FBI, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, the Departments of Defense and State, the National Institutes of Health, and the National Science Foundation in dialogue and activities to address issues of national security and higher education.

In addition, the higher education community hopes to work with DHS and HSAC more closely on issues impacting our international students including on issues of entry into the U.S. for their studies, issues surrounding approval of work authorization and Optional Practical Training (OPT), and SEVP and the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS).

We welcome the opportunity to engage with DHS, HSAC, and the new Academic Subcommittee as you take up this important work. We do not believe this subcommittee is meant to replace HSAAC, and indeed we continue to believe that DHS needs a more regular way to engage with the higher education community on these important issues. We hope you will reach out to our associations and the higher education community as you take up this important work.

Sincerely,



Ted Mitchell, President

On behalf of:

American Association of Community Colleges
American Association of State Colleges and Universities
American Council on Education
Association of American Universities
Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges
Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities
Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
Council for Christian Colleges & Universities
Council of Graduate Schools
NAFSA: Association of International Educators
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities

Cc: Michael Miron, Acting Executive Director, Homeland Security Advisory Council,
Office of Partnership and Engagement

Trent Frazier, Executive Director, Office of Academic Engagement and Campaigns