

United States House of Representatives
Subcommittee on Research and Science Education,
Committee on Science and Technology

Hearing on:
“Status of Visas and Other Policies for Foreign Students and Scholars”

Testimony of:
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Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to testify at today’s hearing on the subject of visas for foreign students and scholars. My name is Allan Goodman and I am the President and CEO of the Institute of International Education (IIE). Thanks to the work of many U.S. government officials and university leaders and their international student advisors, there is good news to report. Overall international student enrollments in U.S. colleges and universities increased in the 2006/2007 academic year by over 3% from the previous year, ending several years of decline in the wake of 9/11. New enrollment figures rose by 10% in all fields and by 16% for international graduate students in science and engineering. In a country that produces more undergraduates with degrees in the visual and performing arts than in engineering and science, our future progress depends on these trends continuing and there are good prospects that they will.

The Institute follows these developments closely. Founded in 1919, IIE is among the world's largest and most experienced international education and training organizations. Our mission is to promote closer educational relations between the people of the United States and those of other countries, strengthen and link institutions of higher learning globally, build leadership skills and enhance the capacity of individuals and organizations to address local and global challenges, and rescue scholars – many of whom are in the science and math fields.. While we are perhaps best known for administering the flagship Fulbright program on behalf of the U.S. Department of State, we also administer the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program and the National Security Education Program on behalf of the Department of State and the Department of Defense respectively, as well as more than 200 other education or exchange programs sponsored by organizations, corporations and foundations. All in all, more than 18,000 men and women from 175 nations participate in IIE programs each year. Applications this year are at record levels in all these programs.

In addition to administering programs, IIE identifies emerging trends in international academic mobility through its *Open Doors* report. This report is supported by the Department of State and released annually during International Education Week in November. Through “Open Doors” data which we have been collecting since our founding year, we can analyze the changes in flows of international students to the US and US students abroad, and help policy makers address the factors affecting those shifts in numbers, destinations, and fields of study.

The Benefits of Welcoming International Students to the U.S.

You have asked me to articulate the benefits to U.S. scientific enterprise and to the U.S. more broadly in welcoming foreign students and scholars. But let me start with a quick overview of all international students studying in the U.S. because I think the facts are compelling. In academic year 2006/07, 582,984 international students studied in the United States, up 3.2% from the prior year and up 10% in terms of new students entering their US campus for the first time in fall 2006. These students contributed \$14.5 billion to the U.S. economy through their expenditures on tuition and living expenses. In fact, the U.S. Department of Commerce ranks international education as the U.S.'s 5th largest service sector export.

But these students don't just benefit our national economy. Their presence diversifies our campuses – particularly important since only 1% of American students studied abroad in the past year and yet will have careers that require global perspectives. International students help Americans gain a critical understanding of other cultures and languages such as Arabic, Korean and Farsi. They help to develop long lasting relationships between the U.S. and other nations – some notable examples of exchange students who studied in the U.S. are former Prime Minister Tony Blair, former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, and Afghan President Hamid Karzai. Having tomorrow's leaders live and learn in the U.S. assists our long term foreign policy goals and is indeed one of this country's strongest diplomatic assets.

It is important to note that these international students study at accredited institutions of all types – whether they are studying at community college, specialized institutions, or are working toward a Baccalaureate, Master or Doctoral degree. They also study in all regions. Twenty three percent of these students (over 132,000) study in the Pacific Northwest, Mr. Chairman, while 22 percent (over 126,000) study in the Midwest region from which the ranking minority member hails.

The Benefit of International Students to the U.S. Scientific Enterprise

The impact of international students and scholars on U.S. scientific enterprise is quite significant. Over 35% of all international students in the U.S. study in science or engineering-related fields. American campuses and graduate departments increasingly rely on international students to provide valued research or assistance in teaching. Today, more than one third of U.S. engineering and computer science faculty are foreign-born, many of whom came to the U.S. first as an international student. Nearly 50% of the U.S. doctorates awarded in engineering and computer science go to international students and many foreign students are serving as teaching or research assistants especially in Science and Technology graduate departments to which American students are simply not applying. These students and scholars further contribute through patent applications and innovation.

And there is a further ripple effect --- more than 50% of Ph.D. engineers working in the U.S. are foreign born. 45% of math and computer scientists, as well as life scientists and physicists working in the U.S. are foreign-born. More than one-third of Nobel Laureates from the United States are immigrants. Over 60% of finalists in the 2004 Intel Science Talent Search, which are the top high school science students in America, were the children of immigrants with 20% of those parents coming to the U.S. as international students.

Because international students and scholars bring so many benefits to U.S. scientific research, we must pay close attention to the impact our immigration and visa issuance policies have. The new policies and procedures put in place after 9/11 did have a chilling effect and we did see the number of students coming here drop, if even only by 1-2 percentage points. Those numbers

were magnified by the stories students and scholars told about visa waiting time, denials, and hostile treatment at our ports of entry and grew into a virtually worldwide perception that international students were no longer welcome in America. The U.S. Foreign Service and the higher education community responded vigorously to correct that misperception and all of us will have to continue to be proactive in assuring the international community that America has found a way to secure our borders and still promote international educational exchange. The Fulbright International Science and Technology Fellowships, launched by the State Department in 2006, sent an important signal to outstanding graduate students around the world that the U.S. welcomes these talented individuals and offers them unparalleled opportunities to advance their careers and contribute to scientific research.

The Institute of International Education: Promoting the Exchange of People and Ideas

As I mentioned earlier, the mission of the Institute of International Education is to promote, foster, and support the exchange of people and ideas. The Institute was founded in the wake of World War I under the premise that there could be no lasting peace without greater understanding between nations—and that international educational exchange formed the strongest basis for fostering such understanding.

The Institute was then, and is now, a catalyst for educational exchange. It serves as a central point of contact and source of information both for U.S. higher education and for foreign nations interested in establishing educational relations with the United States. In fact, it was IIE's President that persuaded the government to create nonimmigrant student visas, bypassing post-war quotas set in the Immigration Act of 1921.

Today, the programs under our stewardship continue to educate future leaders from the United States and around the world but also work to find new ways to reach out to those countries and regions that are least understood by Americans, have some of the lowest exchange numbers and are suffering some of the most entrenched and complex challenges. Our work now encompasses every region of the world and nearly every country. We have a network of offices worldwide and six regional centers in the United States to encourage and facilitate robust exchange.

You have asked how we work with both the university community and the federal government in promoting exchange. We work extraordinarily closely with both.

A Resource for Institutions and Students Alike

The Institute is a resource for domestic and international academic communities. The IIE Network serves colleges, universities, and international exchange agencies worldwide and offers its 900 member institutions a thriving on-line community (www.iienetwork.org), an electronic newsletter, and comprehensive print and electronic directories including www.StudyAbroadFunding.org and www.FundingUSStudy.org, Intensive English USA and the heavily used IIE Passport.org study abroad website and publications. Our IIE Network also conducts seminars and workshops in the U.S. and overseas, including our annual IIE Best Practices Conference in the U.S. and workshops such as "Internationalizing Your Campus: Global Resources for Local Universities." IIE honors the most outstanding initiatives that are being conducted by member colleges and universities with the Andrew Heiskell Awards for Innovation in International Education. More than 50 such outstanding programs were recognized in the past 7 years, including one for faculty exchanges at Congressman Carnahan's alma mater.

IIE helps international students gain information on studying in America, assists educators in recruiting international students and establishing linkages with overseas partners. Our signature “IIEPassport” website and books are a resource for both students and advisers, offering listings of over 7,000 study abroad programs worldwide, and advice on how to select the right program for each student’s needs, and how to fund financial support as well. The Institute also coordinates events on the ground connecting students and parents to higher education representatives. For instance, IIE organized eleven U.S. Higher Education Fairs throughout Asia with more than 100 U.S. campus officials on-site to present objective and timely information to more than 10,000 students and parents in countries such as Indonesia, India, Japan, Thailand and Vietnam.

In 2006, the Department of State selected the Institute to manage the global Regional Educational Advising Coordinators (REAC) program on behalf of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. The ten REACs support 450 EducationUSA advising centers around the world, providing leadership and expertise to educational information centers and U.S. embassies and serving as a liaison between ECA staff in Washington and the advising centers overseas. There is significant outreach that goes on under the REAC program. Just one example is IIE’s Southeast Asian regional center in Bangkok which ran workshops with the American University Alumni Association (AUA) to help English teachers from Thailand and neighboring countries prepare their students for the new TOEFL exam and other U.S. standardized tests.

IIE’s Work with the Federal Government

Our relationship, cooperative agreements, and work with the federal government are longstanding. We are honored to have administered the flagship Fulbright program on behalf of the US government since the program’s inception in 1946. This includes the U.S. and foreign student and scholar programs, as well as the Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program.

We also administer the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program and the National Security Education Program (NSEP) on behalf of the Department of State and Department of Defense respectively. The Gilman program helps American students with high financial need to study abroad in non-traditional destinations and NSEP helps US undergraduate and graduate students study critical language and then “pay-back” through up to a year of service in one of the federal agencies related to our national security, or in an educational organization if no appropriate position exists in the relevant federal agencies. The Humphrey program brings accomplished professionals from designated countries to the U.S. at a midpoint in their careers for one year of study and related professional experiences. They return home to leadership positions in public service fields, bringing a deep appreciation of American values and ways of doing business. It is important to know that each and every one of these programs are experiencing record numbers of applications. The thirst for international study and training continues to grow, and the study abroad student population is more diverse than ever before in our history.

In addition to supporting and encouraging student study abroad, IIE has a long tradition of rescuing scholars who are threatened with persecution or death due to their scholarly pursuits. The Institute has rescued thousands of students and scholars beginning with those caught in the crossfire of the Bolshevik Revolution. That work continued throughout the 20th Century as IIE rescued persecuted scholars fleeing Europe in WWII and during the Hungarian Revolution, and resettled them on U.S. campuses. In 2002, these efforts were formalized in the Scholar Rescue Fund, a permanent endowment supported by both private and public funds which allows for more rapid response in times of crisis.

Through the Scholar Rescue Fund, scholars are temporarily resettled at a host university anywhere in the world where they can resume their work guest lecturing, teaching, researching and writing. The host university shares in the expenses of supporting a scholar and has the benefit of their participation in the university community. I mention the Fund because often these scholars have science or engineering degrees. For example, today in the U.S., Rice University is hosting a scholar from Belarus who teaches Biomedical Optics and Thermal Physics, the University of Florida is home to a Thermal Hydraulics professor from Iraq, Kent State hosts a Computer and Electrical Engineering scholar also from Iraq, the University of Oklahoma is temporarily home to an Iraqi professor of Geology and Micropaleontology. The U.S. Government supports not only the global work of the Fund but also a more specific mission to rescue Iraqi scholars currently under threat.

The Visa Mantis Process and an Improved Flow of International Students

The number of international students enrolled in colleges and universities in the United States increased by 3.2% to a total of 582,984 in the 2006/07 academic year. This is the first significant increase in total international student enrollments since the numbers began declining after 9/11. This past year saw an even bigger jump in the number of “new” enrollments – that is students who were enrolled at a college or university for the first time in the fall of 2006, which rose 10% from the previous year – this is a marked increase.

I took the opportunity to take a closer look at the numbers of international students from the alma maters of members of the subcommittee. For the 2006/2007 school year, all the numbers are up. For example, the University of Wyoming hosted 478 international students – an increase of 8.6% over the previous year and the University of California at Berkeley hosted 3,167 international students, an 18% increase.

An examination of first time foreign students in graduate science and engineering programs also shows an increase. According to the results of a National Science Foundation (NSF) survey released just last week enrollment of first-time, full-time foreign graduate students on temporary visas studying science and engineering (S&E) grew by 16 percent in 2006, following a 4 percent increase in 2005. These increases reflect a reversal of the declines in enrollments of new foreign S&E graduate students in the wake of September 11th, which had declined by 19% between 2001 and 2004. The National Science Foundation credits a variety of factors for the increases including improvements in the quality and attractiveness of science and engineering education in other countries as well as application and approval rates for student visas.

However, according to NSF, despite the recent increases, both first-time, full-time and total enrollments in 2006 for foreign S&E graduate students are still somewhat below the levels earlier in the decade. Foreign students represent 29 percent of all science and engineering graduate students – this is down from 31 percent in 2003. These numbers from the National Science Foundation’s Science Resources Statistics division closely parallel IIE’s Open Doors findings.

The turnaround and improvement achieved in the last few years reflect substantial progress by the Department of State to make the visa process more predictable for students and scholars. The change in the Visa Mantis process announced in February of 2005 and a redoubling of efforts by the Department of State and its Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs to attract international students to U.S. campuses was instrumental in helping to achieve this change in the enrollment numbers. They launched a consistent and multi-pronged push to make the visa process more predictable for students and scholars and to attract or *re*-attract international students. This has included efforts such as the first U.S. University Presidents Summit on International Education

that brought together 123 presidents or chancellors. It was there that Secretary Rice announced; “America’s mission in this new century must be to welcome more foreign students to our nation and send more of our citizens abroad to study. To be successful, our government and our universities must forge a new partnership for education exchange, a partnership that rest on new thinking and action.” This was a very important tone to set from the top and was buttressed by outreach conducted together by university presidents or chancellors along with high-ranking members of the State Department to critical regions of the world.

In addition, the Department placed a high priority on increasing consular personnel —adding 570 new consular officers since September 2001, to expedite the visa process. They were also quick to accept our offer to brief all consular officers undergoing training at FSI on the concerns that we consistently heard from international students and officials at American host campuses, as well as the importance of international education to the U.S. economy, its impact on national security, and progress in the STEM fields.

The extent of improvement has been substantial and is due not only to efforts by the State Department but also by the increased outreach undertaken by American college and university officials to reassure international students and their parents that they are welcome on America’s campuses. We know from our Open Doors survey of higher education institutions enrolling international students that 60 percent of responding institutions have taken special steps to ensure that the number of international students on their campuses does not decline. And that special steps included new international programs or collaborations (33%), as well as new staff or additional staff time devoted to international recruitment (26%), new funding for international recruitment trips (23%), and new funding for marketing and promotion of programs (21%). Institutions that devoted more resources for international student recruitment trips seem to have concentrated mainly on Asia. Of course, we can always all do more and must ensure that we keep up our efforts to attract the world’s brightest students to U.S. campuses. But it is clear that there is significant interest and effort among institutions of higher learning to attract, keep and nurture foreign students.

What More Needs to Be Done?

We can all imagine how circumstances might impact international students coming to the United States. Many of us have helped our own children negotiate entering college and understand that it can be a time of great anticipation and excitement but also nervousness and trepidation for young people. Mr. Chairman, you along with your colleagues the ranking member Mr. Ehlers, Mr. Bartlett and Mr. Lipinski, can better understand the challenges faced by *any* university student leaving home for the first time given your backgrounds as a professors. But, imagine the incredible fortitude, drive and courage to leave your home country, fly to the United States, navigate the non-immigrant visa review and border entry processes and enter an institution of higher learning here in America. We owe it to these students and to their parents to make the process as accessible, predictable, and respectful as we can while also protecting our national security and insuring that only legitimate students are granted the privilege to study in the United States.

The most immediate need now is to better train Department of Homeland Security border inspectors. All too often we hear of unpleasant and extremely harassing treatment of incoming students and scholars, particularly of those who come from the Middle East or whose name identifies them as an adherent of Islam. Sometimes the inspector does not appear to understand the process by which international students are admitted to our colleges and universities, and end up questioning the student about issues that have already been decided by the visa-granting

officer back in the home country. This treatment can be particularly intimidating for students who may be traveling abroad for the very first time and who may be confused of what is being asked of them. Some students hail from countries or cultures where figures of authority are never questioned or talked to – even if trying to clarify a request or order. And, of course, there are cultural or religious issues to be bridged. For instance, some Muslim women are not allowed to talk to men outside their family. Some cultures do not encourage direct eye contact with strangers, and hence the student may appear evasive or non-forthcoming in responding.

We have offered to provide similar training to Homeland Security border officials, at no cost to DHS, as we now do routinely for newly trained consular officers at the Foreign Service Institute, and are awaiting DHS approval.

Attached to my statement is a PowerPoint we have already provided to Department of Homeland Security to use in their computer based training.

IIE and our network of 900 colleges and universities is deeply committed to sustaining and expanding the flows of talented international students in the science and technology (S&T) fields, who continue to see America as the destination of choice for their overseas training. We also are working hard to expand opportunities for Americans from all backgrounds and in all fields, particularly the challenging fields of S&T, to study abroad at some point in their academic career and to gain the international perspectives and global experience that will be vital to their success and to our country's competitiveness, in the 21st century. Through the Global Engineering Education Exchange, a consortium of 32 U.S. engineering schools and over 50 outside the U.S. is helping several hundred engineering students each year study outside their country on a tuition-swap basis, and several other programs that IIE has the honor to administer also provide opportunities for young American scientists and engineers to study and do research abroad.

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, thank you for your interest in international exchange and for inviting me to testify today. I look forward to answering any questions you might have. I also look forward to the day when we will read in our headlines that cancer has been cured or a vaccine developed to prevent HIV. America's open academic doors may already have brought the international graduate student or researcher here who will hasten the day when that good news will be possible.