

**OPENING STATEMENT OF  
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SUBCOMMITTEE ON RESEARCH AND SCIENCE EDUCATION  
COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

*Status of Visas and Other Policies for Foreign Students and Scholars*

February 7, 2008

2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

2318 Rayburn House Office Building

International students and scholars are an important part of our science and technology economy and diplomacy. Whether U.S. scientists and engineers are traveling abroad or foreign scientists and engineers are coming here, the facilitation of global scientific exchange is necessary to overcome many of our global technology problems. In this flat world, we must indeed figure out a way to keep our country safe but open to those with no ill intent.

Only a small fraction of international students and scholars receive the opportunity to study or teach in the U.S. The lucky ones often leave behind spouses and children to pursue multi-year programs and appointments. In recent years, some students have avoided returning home for long periods of time because they fear possible delays and the maze of red tape associated with getting back into the U.S. Consequently, many of these students experience personal hardship and sacrifice to follow their dream of studying at one of our institutions. I think we are all aware of the impacts this can have on universities and scientific progress, but the human factor of this issue is often overlooked. I know many of our witnesses have been working on a solution to this problem.

In the post-9/11 world, the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of State have worked diligently to ensure that students who pose no security risk to the U.S. can still attend our higher educational institutions. Nonetheless, the last six years have been challenging for both students, scholars, and the government to find a critical balance of interests. It is encouraging to see the numbers indicating that international student interest and attendance at U.S. universities has rebounded. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today about the progress and challenges still facing our visa system.