



SEVIS

Student And Exchange Visitor Information System

Newsletter

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U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

A Message From Lou Farrell, *Director*

Dear Colleagues:

We are excited to tell you about the latest news from the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) at U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

When the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) was launched in 2003, we entered a new era of student visa management—one in which our nation's need for border security was balanced with our desire to maintain open doors for legitimate international students seeking to study in the United States.

By that measure, SEVIS has been a resounding success. And a significant portion of that success is thanks to the support and feedback we have received from educators, administrators, admissions personnel, students and other users of the system.

In fiscal year 2009, we will launch SEVIS II, the next generation of the program. SEVIS II is one of the four mission critical initiatives that will be supported by the increase in fees that SEVP is recommending

SEVIS II is the direct result of extensive collaboration with the educational community and other stakeholders. We recognize that cus-

tommer service is an ongoing process, and SEVP encourages continued suggestions and ideas for ongoing improvements. This newsletter offers a comprehensive overview of what the SEVIS user community can expect in SEVIS II.

Why is this collaboration so important to SEVP? It's more than simply a matter of maintaining strong relationships with our primary partners in the educational community—though that is indeed critically important. It's also a matter of safeguarding the American people.

At a time when the United States is experiencing new challenges in the form of international terrorism, it is vital that America continue to welcome students from across the globe, for diplomatic, cultural and economic reasons. SEVIS II promises to be more user-friendly and more efficient, and it will better serve the needs of all of our stakeholders.


Lou Farrell, *SEVP Director*

In this Issue

SEVIS II: On the Horizon	2
SEVIS II: The Next Generation	3
SEVIS II Key Features	4
Implementation	5

SEVIS II: On the Horizon

SEVIS is a Web-based information system that enables schools and program sponsors to provide real-time electronic information and event notifications, via the Internet, to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Department of State throughout the course of a student's or exchange visitor's stay in the United States.

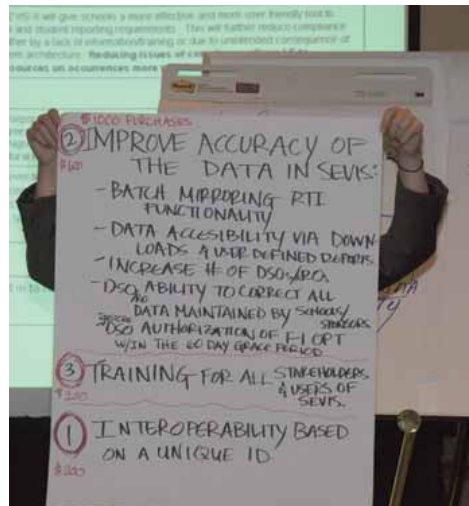
In fiscal year 2009 (FY09), SEVP will launch SEVIS II, the next generation of the five-year-old Web-based program for managing international students and exchange visitors studying in the United States. SEVP is currently being developed with collaborative input from stakeholders in the educational community, the law enforcement community and others, to ensure that the new program is as efficient, effective and user-friendly as possible.

SEVIS: The First Five Years

After 9/11, Congress directed DHS, via the Homeland Security Act of 2002, to implement a better way of keeping track of international students and scholars who come to the United States to study.

The challenge for SEVP was to implement a system that would effectively maintain the records of visiting students and scholars without creating undue burdens on students, scholars or university administrators, or negatively affecting the ability of schools and universities to recruit students from abroad.

While it was important to ensure the integrity of the borders, it was equally important for SEVP to serve



SEVIS users from schools, the security sector and other stakeholder communities brainstorm improvements including biometric identifiers and enhanced search capabilities.

as a full partner with the educational community in maintaining the reputation of American universities as the best in the world—the best in terms of education quality, value and overall experience.

SEVIS was launched in February 2003. This Web-based system replaced an outdated paper-driven system that suffered from incomplete and missing data and reporting lag times.

The launch of this new nationwide system was widely acknowledged as a successful and innovative program—due largely to the collaboration of school officials with government employees to make the transition as smooth as possible.

While SEVIS proved to be adaptable to changing needs and increased

demands, the system at first faced limitations in searching and sorting, producing management reports and exporting data. In response to these concerns, SEVP issued a total of 65 patches and release updates over the last five years, with the most recent taking place in October 2007. Additionally, over the course of the five years since SEVIS was first introduced, school administrators and other end-users have offered suggestions for improving the system, and SEVP has listened closely to these suggestions.

After its first year of operation, the SEVIS program was recognized with the 2004 Pioneer Award for Excellence in Government Innovation by the E-Gov Institute in Washington, D.C.

SEVIS II: The Next Generation

As part of SEVP's commitment to continuous improvement, SEVP developed an independent and comprehensive feasibility study after receiving ideas and suggestions from a series of working groups comprised of educators and security professionals. SEVP also initiated targeted outreach with stakeholder communities, such as the Association of International Educators (NAFSA), the world's largest nonprofit association dedicated to international education.

The feasibility study made it clear that, based upon changes in technology and new demands on the system, it was time to develop the next generation—SEVIS II.

Completed in January 2007, the study indicated that comprehensive changes were needed to make SEVIS more usable and effective for users in the national security, law enforcement and educational communities who rely heavily on SEVIS data and its interoperability.

The key findings identified the following:

- The need to have open, flexible and scalable architecture;
- The need for a person-centric system;
- The need to become paperless; and
- The need for training and data integrity to be more robust.

The culmination of this outreach effort was a pair of two-day stakeholder conferences held in Washington, D.C., in August 2007 in which university technical staff, private contractors, and

end-users from community colleges, private and public universities gathered to prioritize SEVIS II's functional requirements.

SEVP developed these conferences with the following assumptions:

- Changes to SEVIS in the next generation should be geared toward making the system as user-friendly as possible;
- SEVIS II should incorporate biometric identifiers and single sign-on capability to better serve the goal of "one person, one record";
- SEVIS II should, wherever possible, make use of existing frameworks and processes used by other DHS databases to ensure consistency and ease of use; and
- SEVIS II should eliminate the need for ad hoc support systems.

To that end, SEVIS II will be built around a common DHS architectural framework that will take advantage of shared services and data fields to allow cost- and data-sharing among agencies.

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is currently pursuing its own Business Transformation Initiative to modernize the agency's business processes, information technology and customer service. ICE and USCIS will work together closely in developing SEVIS II and the USCIS Business Transformation Initiative to maximize interoperability and eliminate redundant processes within the two systems. Most significantly, the account set-up process will be the same for both SEVIS II and the USCIS Business Transformation Initiative, which should make both systems more user-friendly.

In addition, SEVIS II will, to the greatest extent possible, parallel the intake processes being developed for the USCIS Transformation Initiative. Requests will be accepted electronically, via mail or in person. Supporting documentation will be received electronically as part of application submission, though in-person and mail capability will also be available.

Finally, SEVIS II will incorporate the existing system for biometric vetting and storage, including the collection and use of fingerprints, used by the DHS U.S. Visitor and Immigrant Status Indicator Technology (US-VISIT) program. ICE shall provide US-VISIT with SEVIS II requirements for biometric vetting and storage.

Responses to SEVIS Stakeholder Conference

"What I saw over the past two days was the sharing of ideas and identification [and] that partnership between SEVIS users and SEVP has provided a better understanding of our respective needs. We were each trying to find solutions to the other's challenges—the clearest example of effective collaboration. I look forward to SEVP's continued commitment to have the education community at the table throughout the development process."

—David Elwell, Brandeis University, NAFSA News, August 2007

"The SEVP team appeared genuinely interested in the concerns and needs of the SEVIS stakeholder community. My hope is that as a result of these discussions, SEVIS II will prove to be more flexible and robust, while still preserving some of the better features of the present system."

—Laura Taylor, Cornell University, NAFSA News, August 2007

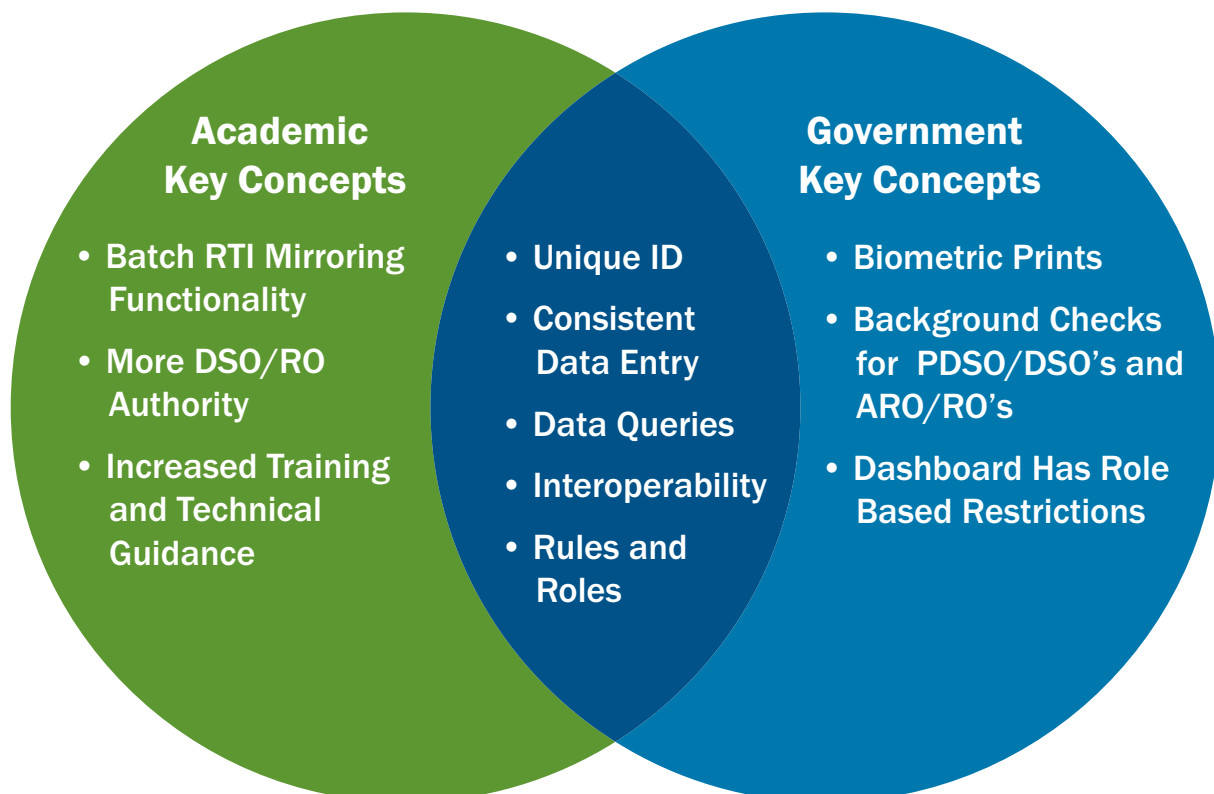
SEVIS II Key Features

A second stakeholder conference in August 2007 built upon the decisions and definitions reached by the academic community in the first conference. While both groups had varying missions, they agreed upon the core concept that the guiding principle of SEVIS II would be “one person, one record.” This new methodology not only makes the system easier to use for school administrators but also eliminates the old problem of multiple records, ensuring data integrity.

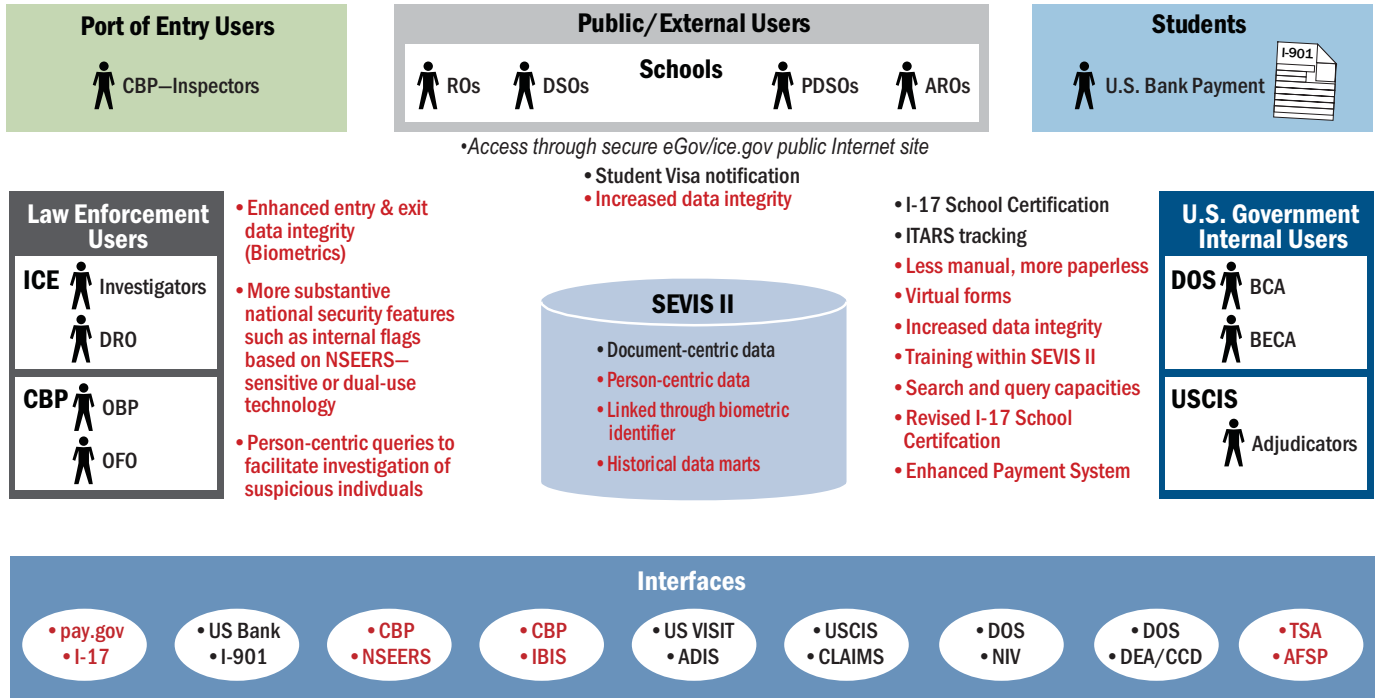
The following chart was developed to identify key priorities for the academic and government stakeholder groups and illustrates the common priorities for SEVIS II shared by these groups:

The goal of the numerous outreach efforts by SEVP was to improve SEVIS’s usability, efficiency and effectiveness. SEVIS II will feature:

- **A Unique Identifier System.** Introduces a “one-person, one-record” system that will help reduce data inconsistencies and duplications and reduce document fraud through the use of biometric identifiers.
- **A Paperless System.** Decreases reliance on paper forms and allows for the real-time update of all forms, moving users toward a paperless environment.
- **Improved Efficiency.** Expedites standard transactions for students and school administrators by integrating information and offering real-time availability of completed forms.
- **User-Friendly Interface.** Consolidates previously separate data management systems into a single portal with a unified look and feel.
- **Enhanced Usability.** Simplifies data entry via standardized formatting and uniform procedures, making the program more user-friendly and reducing the opportunity for errors.
- **Comprehensive Training Module.** Improves convenience and reduces costs for training SEVIS users through an online training guide.
- **Advanced Query and Reporting Tools.** Enhances search capabilities by consolidating information to enable searches based on specific criteria such as academic major, criminal history, immigration status and more.
- **Integrated, Real-Time Information-Sharing.** Integrates threat-tracking systems used by various law enforcement agencies to coordinate more effective investigations and enables real-time automatic notifications and alerts to law enforcement agents to facilitate more timely investigations.



SEVIS II Process Enhancements



Implementation

Relying on state of the art technology, SEVIS II will build upon the strengths of its predecessor while incorporating the specific suggestions of school administrators and other end users to provide a mission-driven collaboration for managing the records of international students and visitors at American educational institutions.

SEVIS II is slated for launch in FY09.

According to the Department of Commerce, international education is America's fifth largest service export—bigger than medical services. International students contribute over \$14.5 billion to the institutions they attend and the surrounding communities—up a billions dollars from the previous year, the largest increase to date, according to the U.S. Department of State.

But of equal importance are the benefits of greater cultural and international understanding that stem from international study and exchange programs. Balancing these benefits with the need for national security will be the continuing challenge for SEVP—a challenge that SEVIS II promises to address even more effectively than the existing system.

“International students and visitors have always been a significant part of American society, but it’s not just about the dollars and the economy. It is equally important that we build strong and positive relationships with students from abroad,” said Lou Farrell, director of SEVP. “In the long run, an important way to keep Americans safe from extremist violence is to introduce international students and other visitors—the future civic and political leaders of their own coun-

tries—to American culture firsthand so that they can return to their countries and help correct some of the negative myths and misunderstandings that often fuel the fire of extremist ideology.

“Over the last five years, the SEVIS technology has played a vital role in making that exchange of cultures and ideas possible,” Farrell concluded. “We intend for SEVIS II to build upon that record of success and to take the program to the next level.”