



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement



SEVIS

Student And Exchange Visitor Information System

Newsletter

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A Message From Susan Geary, Director

From the Director's office:

Seattle, Washington has often been referred to as a community where vision, opportunity, and inspiration abound. As the host city to NAFSA's 57th Annual International Conference, Seattle certainly lived up to its reputation.

A record breaking 6,600 educators gathered in Seattle from May 29-June 3 in one of the world's largest gatherings of professionals in international education and exchange programs. From the plenary speakers and working workshops, to the exhibitor's hall that included something for everyone, this annual conference was an opportunity to meet with NAFSA practitioners, learn of their creative practices and hear their concerns.

For members of the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) this was a significant opportunity to report on the progress that we collectively have engineered: a refined and adaptive fee collection system, a customer care website to provide students with timely information, the creation of easy to access SEVIS policy or SEVIS

Operating Instructions that are available on the website, a constantly evolving website designed for intuitive navigation, and an approach to data fixes that will begin with comprehensive training for DSOs that will soon debut on the SEVP website.

It was also an opportunity to listen. The SEVP members in attendance hosted an Open House at the Westin Hotel after the NAFSA sessions had concluded each day and were pleased to note that the Open House was so well received that occasionally the guest lines expanded into the hallway. As we listened to concerns and problems, we also learned. We also provided a demonstration of the draft web based training modules and the guests were able to navigate through the module. The comments on the draft web based training were abundant and lead to significant improvements that our entire community will share. The SEVP team was inspired by the willingness of all we encountered to contribute to our vision of a continuous improvement to the SEVP program. Another exciting aspect of the conference

SEVIS By The Numbers As Of August 5, 2005

Total approved schools 8,136
Total approved sponsors 1,474
Active students and exchange visitors 765,354
Active dependents of students and exchange visitors 117,154

In Our Focus this Quarter Policy

- Frequently Asked Questions
 - Revision to Travel FAQs
 - Employment
 - * On-Campus
 - * Off-Campus
 - * CPT
 - * OPT
 - * Social Security and Taxes
 - * F-1 Transfers
 - * M-1 Transfers
- Recertification Rule
- Revision of I-20

Information Technology

- Data Fix Backlog Elimination
- Release 5.1 Development

School Certification Branch

- Preparation for Recertification
- Fee Studies

was the sharing of exhibit space with members of the Department of State and their Regional Educational Advising Coordinators (REACs) and fielding questions.

From your questions to your challenges, from CIPPRs to REACs, SEVP encountered not only a city, but also a community where

vision, opportunity, and inspiration abounded.

Susan Geary,
Director



Ravi Shankar (Northwestern University) and Danny Andrade (California Service Center) consider Denise Mackie-Smith's (SEVP) point of view.



Conference attendees gathered at the SEVP open-house during the NAFSA national conference at Seattle.

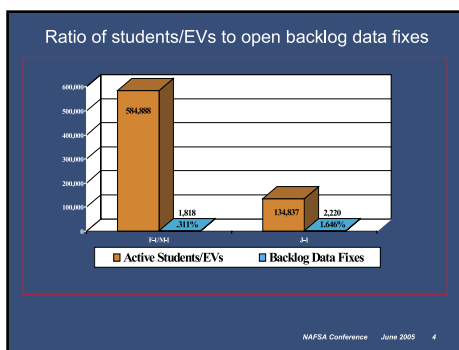


REACS enjoying the moment.

Data Fix Backlog Elimination Plan

SEVP began implementing a Backlog Elimination Plan on April 1, 2005, with the goal of eliminating the data fix backlog within six months. Since April 1, 3,837 F/M backlog tickets have been resolved or closed and 3,137 of the current F/M tickets have been resolved or closed. Of the Exchange Visitor tickets that were backlogged, 1,330 tickets have been resolved or closed and 371 of the current J tickets have been resolved or closed as of August 31, 2005.

A backlogged data fix is one that has been pending for 90 days or more.



SEVIS Fee Implementation

The SEVIS I-901 fee was instituted on September 1, 2004. Several fee payment options were created to ensure that all students/exchange visitors would be able to pay the fee.

Throughout the development of various fee payment options, SEVP has carefully listened to the concerns of the academic community and has, in establishing these various options, ensured that all stu-

dents are able to pay the fee while also ensuring that the cost of fee collection, borne by all applicants, does not rise unnecessarily.

The Western Union option allows applicants to pay the fee in local currency in over 130 countries where Western Union offers their QuickPay option. SEVP added the Western Union option on November 1 without incurring any additional costs. This would not have been a success without partnership with the community.

The enabling legislation requires that the I-901 fee be reassessed every two years. SEVP is gearing up to initiate that survey. Congress has mandated that the full cost of the program be borne by the students/exchange visitors and schools/programs.

Customer Inquiry function added to fmjfee website

On May 1, SEVP added a new feature to the I-901 fee payment website that provides students and exchange visitors the opportunity to: check the status of the fee payment online, ensure receipt of their payment or check the status of their receipt.

Customer Resolution Unit

The Customer Resolution Unit (CRU) was established to address fee payment problems proactively. The CRU became operational on August 10, 2004, and has been engaged since September 1, 2004,

resolving I-901 fee application and payment issues.

The primary function of CRU is to prevent the rejection of student fee applications, thereby expediting the fee payment process as well as better serving the students and exchange visitors in their efforts to pay the fee. The CRU also provides assistance and advice to students or exchange visitors who encounter problems making fee payment.

A secondary function of the CRU is to resolve I-901 application and payment errors in an effort to eliminate the outright rejection of applications and expedite the I-901 fee process.

Specifically, the CRU assists students or exchange visitors who incorrectly entered their address information into the system and provides detailed instructions on how to request a duplicate receipt and have it forwarded to the correct address. The unit has also helped many students and exchange visitors avoid paying the fee twice and having to request a refund for the duplicate payment. Since September 1, 2004, the CRU has processed more than 537,700 applications, has resolved 10,000 issues and processed 2,407 refunds.

This unit can be contacted by email at fmjfee.sevis@dhs.gov



FMJFEE Website

Interested in knowing more about bulk filing for the SEVIS I-901 Fee?

For those interested in establishing a bulk-filing program for schools please send an email indicating your interest and your point-of-contact information to SEVIS. Source@dhs.gov.

We look forward to discussing this with you.

Recertification

The recertification rule is in the DHS review process and once implemented, SEVIS certified schools will be recertified every two years.

Once the rule is approved and implemented, schools will maintain authority to issue Form I-20s throughout the petition process and will be given adequate time to prepare for recertification. We welcome your ideas about the recertification process and look at it as a way to ensure that we are

adequately serving the student/exchange visitor community, while enhancing national security.

I-20 Revisions

Created for the manual world of paper and pen, the existing Form I-20 does not adequately deal with the demands or medium of the automated SEVIS system. To adjust to an automatically created document and to provide the student with adequate reporting instructions, the current I-20 for F-1 and M-1 students has been thoroughly reviewed and revised. The revised document, which is pending OMB approval, provides a more adequate interface with an automated system and more comprehensive student instructions and information fields required for a systems generated document.

It is anticipated that the approval of the revised Form I-20 will be during the first quarter of fiscal year 2006. Once approved, SEVIS will automatically print the new Form I-20.

Update on Institutions Offering Associates Degrees

In November 2003, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) assumed responsibility for the school certification function. The certification function transitioned from a decentralized function in District Offices to a centralized function at ICE Headquarters. Part of the SEVP approach throughout this transition has been to review the current regulations governing school certification, identify ambiguities and provide clarification. This approach allows us to streamline process inefficiencies and achieve a standardized certification process.

One section of the school certification regulations we are reviewing governs the classification of institutions offering associates degrees.

Through participation on international education conferences and contact with community school representatives, we have received extensive feedback on this section of the regulations. Many educators expressed the opinion that the purpose of an associate's degree has evolved in the past decade. We continue to research issues surrounding the development of the policy 20 years ago, including congressional intent in dividing associates degrees between the academic (F visa classification) and M vocational/technical (M visa classification).

Because of our need to better understand the original purpose and subsequent evolution of the M visa classification, at this time we are not reviewing the current classification of programs at approved schools. As SEVP stated in an email message dated July 8, 2004, titled "Follow-up Notice to June 21, 2004 Broadcast Message Regarding School Reclassification,"

the School Certification Branch is reviewing new or updated petitions from institutions offering associates degrees on a case-by-case basis. Our goal is to have a revised policy on the treatment of associates' degrees ready to use during recertification. At that time we will review the classification granted to institutions offering associates degrees with this new policy.

SEVP must balance efforts on this policy with other compelling regulatory issues, for example, developing recertification regulations. We anticipate devoting more resources to this issue after this vital regulation has been published. However, we continue to accept comments on the classifications for community colleges. In addition, as we begin to draft a revised policy we intend to involve community school representatives in the process. We appreciate your patience.

Specific questions about your institution's classification can be directed to the School Certification Branch at 202-305-2346 (option 1) or Schoolcert.SEVIS@dhs.gov.

Institutions may direct general comments on this issue to SEVIS.source@dhs.gov.

Contact Us

- **For I-901 fee payment help:** Visit the SEVP Web site at www.ice.gov/sevis/i901. You can also call the I-901 Customer Service hotline at **785-330-1048** (United States Country Code 011) or e-mail us at fmjfee.SEVIS@dhs.gov.
- **For questions pertaining to your specific school or exchange visitor program,** contact the person listed on your Form I-20 or DS-2019.
- **For schools and programs,** contact the following for all other technical questions: the SEVIS Help Desk at **800-892-4829** between 8 A.M. and 8 P.M. Eastern Time or by e-mail at SEVIShelpdesk@eds.com for assistance and support. For specific technical, urgent cases: Toolbox.SEVIS@dhs.gov
- **For school certification questions:** To check the status of an I-17 petition, confirm receipt of payment or to receive information on a site visit, contact the SEVP School Certification Branch at schoolcert.SEVIS@dhs.gov or **202-305-2346** or by fax at **202-353-3723**.

The School Certification Branch is organized on a state-by-state basis. If a school administrator contacts the School Certification Branch, our staff will direct the call or message to the Case Analyst working with the schools in that state.

SEVIS' commitment to the continual process of improvement begins with your comments, concerns, or suggestions. Please contact SEVIS:

By email: SEVIS.Source@dhs.gov

By phone: **202-305-2346**

By fax: **202-353-3723**

By mail: **ICE/SEVIS**

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