

# SEVP Spotlight

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## DIRECTOR'S CORNER

# Audit Will Serve to Strengthen SEVP



*A message from  
Louis M. Farrell,  
Director of ICE's  
Student and Exchange  
Visitor Program*

The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) strives for openness and accountability in keeping our stakeholders informed about key developments in our program. As such, I would like to inform you that SEVP is currently being audited by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) as a follow-up to an investigation of a California university that was found to have engaged in visa fraud.

As director of SEVP, I welcome this audit and look forward to reviewing GAO's findings to determine if there are ways we might improve our operations to better serve the community of international students, exchange visitors, academic institutions and our other stakeholders.

By way of background, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Homeland Security Investigations investigated Tri-Valley University in Pleasanton, Calif., for visa fraud. As a result of the investigation, the university lost its SEVP certification in 2011.

At the time of the decertification, a majority of the students enrolled in the university were international students from India. They subsequently lost their ability to attend the university. Moreover, Tri-Valley University has, as of this writing, ceased operations. The investigation, which received substantial media coverage, also caught the attention of members of Congress who inquired about



SEVP's process for school certification. Consequently, Senator Diane Feinstein (D-Calif.) and Claire McCaskill (D-Mo.) requested a GAO audit to more fully address their inquiries.

The audit GAO is conducting on SEVP is two-fold: it will examine both the process through which SEVP certifies academic institutions and the process used to monitor compliance of these certified academic institutions. Specific items that the GAO could examine more closely include the re-certification and compliance processes, which would help determine if the current processes are providing appropriate monitoring of certified institutions.

Additionally, the audit will review the technological capabilities of the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System to determine if the system's ability to detect fraud could be strengthened.

Moving forward, SEVP will take the results and recommendations from the audit to ensure SEVP continues to provide timely and accurate information to prospective and current international students, academic officials and varied governmental organizations that have an interest in information on foreign students.

SEVP anticipates the results of the audit will be available in mid-2012. SEVP will continue to keep our stakeholder community informed with recommendations, impact and future actions.

Take Care,  
Lou



**U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement**

# Update on Study in the States

The Study in the States website ([StudyintheStates.dhs.gov](http://StudyintheStates.dhs.gov)) has made tremendous progress toward its intended goal of serving as a clearinghouse of information for international students as well as academic and government stakeholders.

The website, launched in September 2011 and managed by SEVP, is part of Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano's Academic Engagement Initiative, an interagency governmental effort to attract the best and brightest international students to study and learn about expanded post-graduate opportunities in the United States.

As of December 2011, the site received visitors from over 165 countries, including Belarus, India, Ukraine and the United Kingdom. In addition, 20 embassies and consulates have directed traffic to Study in the States; the top non-English languages spoken by users accessing the site are Russian, Chinese and Spanish.

Furthermore, an increasing number of schools are directing traffic to the Study in the States site through permanent links on their international student pages, proving that the site is gaining credibility as the official government resource within the academic community. Academic institutions' webpages generated much of the web traffic to Study in the States.

A key feature of Study in the States is its use of advanced technology, including interactive tools and an expanded use of Facebook and Twitter ([@StudyinStates](https://twitter.com/StudyinStates)) to communicate



with potential students. Social media allows DHS to reach a wider audience of international students via sites these students regularly use. To date, over 2,400 visitors to Study in the States came to the site via Facebook.

In addition to reaching students, many government and academic associations with a vested interest in international student education can connect with Study in the States to obtain up-to-date information and share the message with their stakeholders.

Connecting with academic and government entities via social media allows for key Study in the States messages to rapidly reach thousands of additional stakeholders.

One of the latest improvements to Study in the States is the recently launched school search page ([StudyintheStates.dhs.gov/school-search](http://StudyintheStates.dhs.gov/school-search)). This tool allows for students to easily find a school that is SEVP certified – information that was previously only available by downloading a PDF document.

In the coming months, Study in the States will unveil more dynamic features, including translatable pages, an interactive “Roadmap to Success” that will walk prospective and current students through the entire international student lifecycle and training videos for students.



## CTCEU Participates in NAFSA Conferences

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Homeland Security Investigations, (HSI), Counterterrorism and Criminal Exploitation Unit (CTCEU) participated in several Associations of International Educators (NAFSA) regional conferences throughout the United States in October and November 2011.

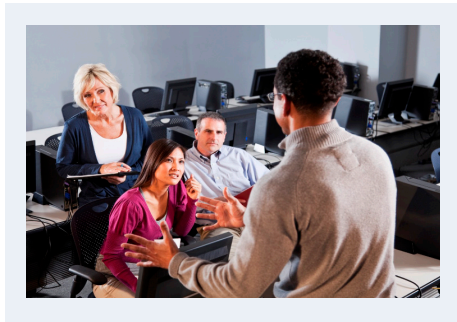
Special Agents presented sessions about Project Campus Sentinel, an outreach initiative aimed at establishing and strengthening professional relationships between academic institutions and local HSI offices. Special Agents also emphasized CTCEU's commitment to preserving the integrity of the international student program. NAFSA

members were introduced to HSI Special Agents representing offices within their local areas, provided with information regarding the Project Campus Sentinel initiative, and given the opportunity to ask questions during and after the sessions.

In addition, Special Agents highlighted CTCEU's role in protecting SEVP-certified institutions against fraud and ensuring national security by identifying individuals or groups who utilize schools to exploit the visa process for criminal or terrorism purposes.

CTCEU looks forward to collaborating with the school community and building a partnership to protect America.

# New Field Representative Unit Launches



The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) Field Representative Unit (FRU) began operating in November 2011. Previously known as the SEVP Liaison Program, the FRU will be responsible for working with external stakeholders, including designated school officials (DSOs) and principal designated school officials (PDSOs), on a daily basis.

SEVP field representatives will visit each of their assigned SEVP certified institutions regularly to provide the following services:

- Conduct training for DSOs
- Review nonimmigrant student files
- Answer questions
- Conduct site visits
- Attend conferences/meetings
- Aid in the implementation of SEVIS II by ensuring training of P/DSOs prior to the transition period

These field representatives will serve as the local representation of SEVP across the nation.

Internally, the FRU knowledge analyst will ensure distribution of information on SEVP policy and procedures within the various components of SEVP to the

field representatives via a virtual office environment, ensuring a seamless line of communication between SEVP headquarters and the field representatives across the country. This cohesive communication strategy will allow the FRU to present critically needed information to external stakeholders quickly and accurately.

The FRU plans to hire three regional managers (East, Central and West) in the first quarter of calendar year 2012. SEVP intends to add another 30 field representatives in the second quarter and 30 more field representatives in the third quarter. These field representatives will have specific, assigned territories nationwide.

After completing an intensive training program, these field representatives will deploy in 2012 and 2013.

## SEVIS UPDATE

# Status Report on SEVIS

### SEVIS Update: Release 6.9 Now Deployed

The Release 6.9 of the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) has deployed. Its purpose is to execute the system change requests (SCRs) that impact the code freeze requirements and enhance batch functionality. It will modify the fields of the Form I-17, "Petition for Approval of School for Attendance by Nonimmigrant Student," and give the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) the ability to adjudicate and restrict a school's ability to enroll additional students if the annual number of students has been exceeded.

SEVP also has tentatively planned the deployment of Release 6.10 of SEVIS in the second quarter of fiscal year 2012.

### SEVIS II Update: Development Status

SEVP continues to progress with the development of SEVIS II. Visualization is



scheduled for completion in mid-March. Post-visualization, SEVIS II will enter the design and development phase. More information on this phase is forthcoming.

With the deployment of SEVIS II, stakeholders can expect to see SEVP linked with other Department of Homeland Security (DHS) agencies, such as U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, Transportation and Security Administration, and U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

The linking of these agencies will create a single DHS customer account for each SEVIS II user, allowing for enhanced security and efficiency. The launch of the customer accounts will begin with SEVP's involvement and will transition to include the additional DHS agencies over time.

# Conference Outreach

## SEVP Planning 2012 Conference Presentations

The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) will participate in conferences across the country to provide necessary information to stakeholders. In their spring 2012 presentation, entitled "SEVIS and SEVIS II Updates," SEVP representatives will provide updated information on both systems. Topics discussed in the sessions will include the updated schedule, visualization, the transition from SEVIS to SEVIS II and the important relationship between policy and SEVIS II.

## Learn More About DHS Outreach

To enhance coordination between the various Department of Homeland Security (DHS)

agencies that play a role in implementing student visa and exchange visitor programs, SEVP is implementing the "One DHS" outreach strategy.

At the Association of International Educators (NAFSA) 2012 Annual Conference and Expo in Houston, Texas, SEVP will host a "One DHS" booth, which will have representatives from all DHS agencies with a vested interest in international students available to answer stakeholder questions. The conference will take place from May 27-June 1, 2012. More details and registration information are available online at [www.nafsa.org](http://www.nafsa.org).



## DSO Knowledge Bulletin



### SEVIS Data Migration Completed

The SEVIS data center migration (DC1) occurred from December 2-December 5, 2011. This was the migration of SEVIS to a new data environment. During this move there were some issues that arose with a couple of our interfaces, which had some impact on batch, but most of these issues have been resolved.

If you believe that there may still be an issue with your interface contact the IT Help Desk at 800-892-4829 between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. EST or email [SEVISHelpdesk@hp.com](mailto:SEVISHelpdesk@hp.com).

## Contacts

### SEVP Contacts

The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) is dedicated to maintaining open communication with international students, as well as academic and government stakeholders, in an effort to provide the necessary support needed while studying in the United States. SEVP has multiple contact options:

- If you need assistance with passwords or Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) technical help, call the SEVIS Help Desk at 800-892-4829 between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. Eastern Standard Time or email [SEVISHelpdesk@hp.com](mailto:SEVISHelpdesk@hp.com).
- If you are a PDSO/DSO or RO/ARO with technical issues requiring immediate attention, please email [Toolbox.SEVIS@dhs.gov](mailto:Toolbox.SEVIS@dhs.gov).
- Our offices are open Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, except holidays.  
**Phone:** 703-603-3400  
**Email:** [SEVP@dhs.gov](mailto:SEVP@dhs.gov)

Find us on the web:  
[www.ice.gov/sevis](http://www.ice.gov/sevis)  
<http://studyinthestates.dhs.gov>

Follow us on Twitter @StudyinStates.  
**Like** Study in the States on Facebook.

### ICE Contacts

To report national vulnerabilities or national security concerns:

Contact ICE's **Counterterrorism and Criminal Exploitation Unit** at [CTCEU@dhs.gov](mailto:CTCEU@dhs.gov).

To report exploitation of student visa programs:

Contact your local HSI Special Agent or call 1-866-DHS-2ICE (1-866-347-2423) or [www.ice.gov](http://www.ice.gov).