

# SEVP Spotlight

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## SEVP Enhances Stakeholder Communication



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

The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) consistently strives to enhance communication with and outreach to stakeholders. Two tools that help SEVP accomplish this goal are stakeholder conferences and *Study in the States*.

Over the years, SEVP has expanded its presence and involvement in stakeholder conferences. Currently, SEVP participates in more than 60 conferences annually – ranging from regional academic association conferences to the Association of International Educators (NAFSA) National Conference. SEVP appreciates these events as an opportunity for subject matter experts from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to engage with numerous academic and government officials to address any questions and concerns. This fall, SEVP's conference presentation will focus on recertification, including the proper process and advice for smooth filing. For a complete list of the conferences that SEVP will be participating in this fall season, please see page two in this newsletter.

In September 2011, DHS Secretary Janet Napolitano launched the *Study in the States* website, managed by SEVP. *Study in the States* is part of Secretary Napolitano's initiative to enhance our nation's economic, scientific and technological competitiveness by finding new, innovative ways to encourage the best and brightest international students to study and learn about expanded post-graduate opportunities in the United States.

In the past year, *Study in the States* has made extensive progress in achieving its mission of providing key information to various stakeholders as demonstrated by the high number of visitors to the site. Over 100,000 visitors accessed *Study in the States* in the last 12 months. Approximately 70 percent of the traffic was first time visitors to the site. All others were returning visitors. Most site visitors came to *Study in the States* through referral traffic, meaning they followed a link from another website. Some of the biggest referrers were ICE.gov, Facebook, DHS.gov, and NAFSA, as well as many embassies and schools.

Social media is a key tool used to accomplish the *Study in the States* mission of engaging stakeholders and serving as a centralized location for government agencies involved in the international student process. *Study in the States* has both a Facebook and Twitter presence – both of which have more than 1,400 fans and followers. The enhanced use of these platforms provides SEVP with a forum for two-way communication with international students and academic officials. Since its launch, *Study in the States* has also developed new features to provide dynamic content and improve navigation for visitors to the site. A few of these features include the following:

- **School Search Page**  
All schools that accept F and M students must be SEVP-certified. The School Search Page features a searchable database that allows students to ensure the school they want to attend is SEVP-certified. Additionally, a complete, current list of SEVP-certified schools is available for download as a PDF.
- **Study Guide to the States**  
The *Study Guide to the States* is an interactive

online guide that provides an overview of every step of the F and M student process. Students can use it to understand what they need to do to study in the United States, how to maintain their F-1 or M-1 status, and what post-graduate options are available to them.

SEVP is thrilled with the progress made on *Study in the States* and will continue to make it a central source of information for our numerous stakeholders. We look forward to continuing to provide you with the latest information as it relates to international education.

Take Care,  
Lou

### Join the Conversation

FOLLOW

*Study in the States* on Twitter  
@StudyinStates

LIKE

*Study in the States* on Facebook at  
[www.facebook.com/StudyintheStates](http://www.facebook.com/StudyintheStates)



U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement

# SEVP Requesting Feedback



The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) recently requested feedback from stakeholders via *Study in the States* on frequently asked questions that were in draft form regarding The Accreditation of English Language Training Programs Act (Accreditation Act). SEVP was aware that stakeholders were facing confusion with enforcement of the Accreditation Act, and posted draft FAQs on *Study in the States* along with instructions on how to submit stakeholder feedback via e-mail. This method of feedback proved to be beneficial both to the stakeholder community and SEVP. Stakeholders could provide their input, note their concerns and aid in eliminating confusion while the FAQs were still in

draft form. Since that time, SEVP has integrated stakeholder feedback and the final FAQs on this issue are now available on ICE.gov.

Due to the success of this feedback method, SEVP intends to use the same process while drafting new guidance related documents. SEVP will be posting draft guidance documents on *Study in the States* in a manner similar to the draft FAQs posted for the Accreditation Act. As before, when SEVP posts drafts for feedback, the comment period will be open for two weeks, and all users may e-mail their comments, questions and concerns regarding the draft policies.

After the two week comment period, SEVP will compile all feedback received and integrate, as deemed appropriate, stakeholder input in order to finalize guidance. The intent of this process is not only to inform the stakeholder community of SEVP guidance, but also to receive feedback on stakeholder areas of concern, while providing a forum for consideration of all relevant information.

Be sure to monitor the *Study in the States* site as well as social media platforms, such as Twitter and Facebook, for the latest announcements on draft guidance for stakeholder comment.

## SEVP UPDATE

### New Risk Monitoring Method

The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) has developed an integrated process to monitor schools. This process places a greater degree of scrutiny on schools that are more likely to be noncompliant. SEVP subject matter experts (SMEs) have conducted a thorough data analysis to create a scorecard with a list of indicators in various categories that assess a school's risk level. This tool applies standardized quantitative risk scores to schools throughout the certification lifecycle in a consistent and objective manner.

SEVP's SMEs compared numerous indicators to establish weighted risk levels for each indicator. Using the weights derived from the data analysis, SEVP now employs a tool during adjudication to document risk indicators and produce an overall risk score. This integrated process buttresses SEVP's confidence in our red flag analysis and provides a better indication of the proposed risk for a particular school.

SEVP can allocate internal resources accordingly after comparing schools to the indicator list to determine relative risk. A higher risk level indicates the need for an application of additional resources to monitor that school for a period of time.

SEVP also conducts random compliance checks to ensure school officials are following regulations. School officials should not be alarmed by a written notification from SEVP. These notices may be a part of a random compliance check, instead of a risk assessment. If you have any questions or concerns regarding notifications from SEVP, please feel free to contact the SEVP Response Center at 703-603-3400.

## SEVP's Fall 2012 Conference Schedule

<b>Nov. 6</b>	NAFSA <i>Region VI Conference</i> Columbus, OH
<b>Nov. 4-6</b>	NAFSA <i>Region X Conference</i> Niagara Falls, NY
<b>Nov. 6</b>	ACCET <i>Accrediting Council for Continuing Education and Training Annual Conference</i> Lake Tahoe, NV
<b>Nov. 8</b>	NAFSA <i>Region I Conference</i> Tacoma, WA
<b>Nov. 13-15</b>	NAFSA <i>Region I Conference</i> Tacoma, WA
<b>Nov. 13-18</b>	NAFSA <i>Region VIII Conference</i> Alexandria, VA
<b>Nov. 30- Dec. 1</b>	TABS <i>The Association of Boarding Schools Annual Conference</i> Washington, D.C.

# Flight School Fraud and ICE/TSA Cooperation



U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Counterterrorism and Criminal Exploitation Unit (CTCEU) is the only national program dedicated to the enforcement of nonimmigrant visa regulations and investigation of violations. Currently, CTCEU proactively develops cases for investigation from the Student Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) and the United States Visitor and Immigrant Status Indicator Technology (US-VISIT) system. SEVIS and US-VISIT house the records of millions of nonimmigrants present in the United States at any given time including foreign students who are attending flight school as well as on those who have overstayed or otherwise violated the terms and conditions of their admission.

The SEVIS Exploitation Section, a critical component of the CTCEU, combats exploitations of the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) by analyzing and referring school fraud criminal investigations to the field, including flight schools certified by SEVP. One such case yielded the arrest of a flight school owner for encouraging the illegal entry of aliens for private financial gain. In this case, ICE suspected the flight school, which was not SEVP-certified, of fraudulently recruiting and training foreign flight students from Egypt. The investigation revealed that the flight school owner applied

to SEVP-certified schools in the students' name, often without the students' knowledge, for the sole purpose of obtaining a valid Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status (Form I-20). The students, in turn, used the Forms I-20 to get vocational visas (M-1) to enter the United States to attend the non-SEVP certified flight school.

This is a great example of ICE's layered enforcement approach to protecting the integrity of SEVIS and the entire visa process – identifying and disrupting visa fraud overseas, dismantling transnational organizations and prosecuting perpetrators in the United States.

In early 2011, the Transportation Security Agency (TSA) requested that ICE/CTCEU review its Alien Flight School Program (AFSP) which focuses on students attending flight schools, for potential vulnerabilities.

ICE and TSA have identified and are discussing several ways to reduce flight school fraud including:

- Sharing AFSP data between ICE and TSA
- Implementing TSA review, but not determination, of legal presence of alien flight students during inspections of AFSP flight training providers
- Implementing a joint ICE Homeland Security Investigations (HSI)/TSA outreach to local airport officials, and to flight training providers that train F and M flight students
- Assisting HSI and TSA field office personnel with investigations involving flight schools, and F and M flight students through research, resources and knowledge sharing about laws and regulations

In late 2011, CTCEU developed and implemented Operation Clipped Wings – an enforcement operation aimed at lessening the vulnerabilities identified in the AFSP and the critical infrastructure areas associated with aircraft. To date, Operation Clipped Wings has identified more than 30 ICE investigative leads and led to four arrests.

ICE is committed to upholding national security and has made significant progress in identifying and preventing terrorists from exploiting the visa process while at the same time ensuring a growing and robust F and M student population that continues to make the United States the “gold standard” in education and training around the world.

## SEVIS UPDATE

### New SEVIS Release

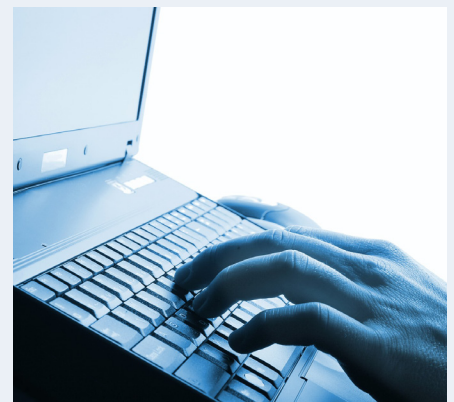
The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) plans to deploy the next update to the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) – Release 6.11 – in the next few weeks.

The main functionality enhancement that will affect users is a new feature related to Classification of Instructional Program (CIP) codes. This functionality will allow SEVIS to recognize if the secondary major on a student record is one that has a CIP code that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has approved for a 17-month extension of optional practical training (OPT). Finding the DHS-approved CIP code allows users to make the

recommendation. Currently, SEVIS only allows users to perform this functionality if the primary major on a student record is a DHS-approved CIP code. As with all SEVIS releases, SEVP will use an official SEVIS broadcast message to distribute full information on the release before it happens.

Additionally, Release 6.11 has updated the country code list in SEVIS to reflect the most current information.

SEVP is already working on the next SEVIS update (Release 6.12) that will incorporate information gathered from stakeholders and address some of the identified requirements.



# SEVP Streamlining Initial Certification Petition Process

The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) is working to decrease the length of time to process a school's petition for initial certification. Currently, the process is backlogged.

Under the previous process, the average processing time was over nine months. It was a very intensive process hampered by limited adjudicators and multiple requests for evidence. While the school can conduct its own research prior to filing their Petition for Approval of School for Attendance by Nonimmigrant Student (Form I-17), many schools frequently fail to submit the necessary information to complete the certification petition application, adding to the processing time.

The new process that SEVP is developing will decrease the initial petition processing time to 60 days from the receipt of a completed school application package. A complete package includes the following:

- Signed Form I-17
- Student and Exchange Visitor Information System electronic submission of Form I-17
- Payment
- Required evidence

SEVP will reject any incomplete package. SEVP will schedule and conduct site visits while SEVP

analysts concurrently review the information in a complete package.

To help implement this process, SEVP will provide updates through *Study in the States*. SEVP will develop and provide tools for school officials to help them navigate the petition process. The new tools will include updated tutorials featuring detailed step-by-step information on how to properly complete and file a petition and an informational evidence checklist, which outlines in detail SEVP's evidence requirements. SEVP believes that educating school officials prior to the initial petition submission will increase the flow of information, streamline the requests for evidence and result in a quicker decision.

SEVP will introduce this dramatic change to the initial certification process in phases to the academic community. SEVP wants to facilitate a smooth transition to the new 60-day process.

SEVP wants all stakeholders to be aware of the implemented process changes, though these changes may only directly affect officials at schools that lose SEVP certification. SEVP will evaluate the results of these process enhancements and anticipates leveraging the outcomes and experiences with this process restructure and applying them to school certification updates and recertification.

## MAVNI Program Reinstated

On May 16, the Department of Defense reinstated the Military Accessions Vital to National Interest (MAVNI) pilot program. MAVNI allows certain non-citizens who are legally present in the United States to join the U.S. military and immediately apply for U.S. citizenship without first obtaining lawful permanent residence. As of October 1, the program started accepting applications, with selected non-immigrant students going to training centers around February 2013. A fact sheet is available on *Study in the States* to help answer questions and concerns that potential international student applicants may have at your school.

## Contact Us

### SEVP Contacts

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

- Our offices are open Monday through Friday, 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time, except holidays  
**Phone:** 703-603-3400  
**Email:** [SEVP@ice.dhs.gov](mailto:SEVP@ice.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
- 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 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time or email [SEVIShelpdesk@hp.com](mailto:SEVIShelpdesk@hp.com)
- If you are a DSO, RO or ARO with technical issues requiring immediate attention, please email [Toolbox.SEVIS@dhs.gov](mailto:Toolbox.SEVIS@dhs.gov)

### 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)