



February 3, 2025

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of State
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Rubio,

On behalf of the American Council on Education (ACE) and the undersigned higher education associations, we write to congratulate you on your confirmation, as well as to bring to your attention major issues of importance for the higher education community relevant to your role leading the State Department. As we shared in our congratulatory message to President Trump, American higher education is a vital national asset.¹ From community colleges and public regionals to major research institutions and liberal arts colleges to faith-based institutions and minority-serving institutions, institutions of higher education, in partnership with the federal government and the states, contribute to the most powerful system for learning, training, research, and innovation in the world. Supporting higher education is essential in developing a skilled workforce necessary for our country's long-term economic growth and national security.

First and foremost, we seek to continue to work closely with the State Department regarding the timely processing of student visas, including F-1s and J-1s. In the 2023-2024 academic year, over 1 million international students chose to study in the United States, and this in turn had an over \$43.8 billion impact across the national economy.² However, we remain concerned that recent slowdowns for scheduling interviews, and reported increases of denials, will discourage international students from choosing the United States.³ We hope under your leadership, the State Department continues to use tools to address wait times and processes for student visa applicants, such as the ability to waive interviews for certain nonimmigrant visa applicants, including those that previously held visas in the same nonimmigrant categories.⁴ By taking action on these immediate issues, you can deliver a welcoming message to current and prospective international students, which can help ensure the United States remains a destination of choice for talented global students seeking to study in our country.

For the past two administrations, higher education has actively engaged with the federal government in addressing national security threats targeting our research and education missions, including malign foreign influence. These efforts have focused on addressing

¹ <https://www.acenet.edu/News-Room/Pages/Statement-Election-Donald-J-Trump.aspx>

² <https://www.nafsa.org/policy-and-advocacy/policy-resources/nafsa-international-student-economic-value-tool-v2>

³ <https://www.acenet.edu/Documents/Letter-State-Visa-Processing-070524.pdf>

⁴ <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/News/visas-news/important-update-on-waivers-of-the-interview-requirement-for-certain-nonimmigrant-visa-applicants.html>

national security threats, while continuing to protect the beneficial and safe exchange of students and researchers across the globe. This has included working with the first Trump Administration on the creation of NSPM-33, and the implementation of that interagency presidential memorandum across the federal agencies.⁵ Higher education is a partner with the federal government in addressing national security concerns in our visa and immigration system. For example, we engaged with the federal government on the creation of the Student Exchange Visitors Program following the terrorist attacks of September 11 and have continuously engaged to improve the system. We hope to continue to work with the State Department and the administration regarding these important issues impacting our exchange programs, international students, and research programs.

We stand ready to be a resource for you in the new administration and we look forward to working with you on these important issues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ted Mitchell".

Ted Mitchell, President

On behalf of:

Achieving the Dream

ACPA-College Student Educators International

American Association of Colleges of Nursing

American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers

American Association of State Colleges and Universities

American College Health Association

American Council on Education

American Dental Education Association

Association of American Medical Colleges

Association of American Universities

Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities

Association of Community College Trustees

Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges

Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities

Association of Public and Land-grant Universities

Career Education Colleges and Universities

Consortium of Universities of the Washington Metropolitan Area

Council for Advancement and Support of Education

Council for Christian Colleges & Universities

Council for Higher Education Accreditation

⁵ June 2023 letter to Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) on implementation of NSPM-33:
https://www.acenet.edu/Documents/Comments_OSTP_NSPM_33_060523.pdf

Council of Graduate Schools
Council on Governmental Relations
Council on Social Work Education
NAFSA: Association of International Educators
National Association for College Admission Counseling
National Association of College and University Business Officers
National Association of Colleges and Employers
National Association of Higher Education Systems
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
Phi Beta Kappa Society
State Higher Education Executive Officers Association