



July 10, 2020

HECA strongly opposes the announcement this week by the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) that non-immigrant F-1 and M-1 international students must return to their home country or face deportation if their educational institution offers only online classes during the fall semester. ICE similarly announced that international students not already in the US would not receive student visas if their institution plans to provide online-only instruction this fall. This applies to students enrolled at elementary, secondary, and post-secondary institutions

HECA has members in 14 countries. Forty percent of our members work in some way with international students. HGRC believes this announcement is a continuation of policies that suggest hostility toward international students and risks further damaging the economic and cultural well-being of our nation's schools and colleges. Historically, the US has a reputation for having the best universities in the world and has traditionally welcomed students from around the globe. We risk damaging our reputation for providing the highest quality education and for being a welcoming, generous nation - and these excellent international students will certainly go elsewhere.

The US hosts over one million international students annually that contribute 41 billion dollars to the US economy and supports 458,290 jobs. (Source: NAFSA's economic analysis for 2018-19 academic year: US Department of Education, US Department of Commerce and the Open Doors report.) To learn more how individual states will be affected economically see here.

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, schools and universities have struggled with how and when to resume classes and other campus-based activities in a safe manner. Many have decided that online instruction is the best way to keep students, teachers, administrators, and communities safe. ICE's decision to send students home exacerbates an already difficult situation as colleges face significant enrollment declines, including international students. For those that have not confirmed in-person classes this fall, the ICE announcement may force institutions to make the difficult decision to reopen when that course of action might not be in the best interest of public health.

If you have further questions, contact the Government Relations Committee, hgrc@hecaonline.org. You can also write to your state and US legislators or ICE explaining why you oppose this action.