

July 13, 2020

Dear Iowa Congressional Delegation,

We write to share our deep concerns about U.S. Immigration and Custom Enforcement's (ICE) new guidance regarding the visa status of international students enrolled at U.S. institutions of higher education this fall.

As the presidents of the state's Regents institutions, we stand with the more than 6,000 international students across our campuses. These talented and dedicated students represent more than 120 nationalities and contribute to the richness and vitality of our campus communities. Many of these students remain in Iowa after graduation; our institutional histories are filled with stories of their accomplishments in sectors and industries that span our state, the nation, and world. Additionally, many of these students have played a pivotal role in performing cutting-edge research and continue to work on our efforts to combat COVID-19 in our communities. It is clear these talented, dedicated individuals bring so much to our campus and broader communities. We should be making it easier, not harder, for our international students to be welcomed and valued members of our campuses and society.

Iowa's public universities are diligently planning for a fall semester that prioritizes the health and safety of students, faculty, and staff while ensuring our students can continue to make academic progress toward their degrees. The ICE ruling creates serious, unnecessary, and harmful burdens – as well as added complexity – to our urgent preparations to open for the fall semester.

The new guidance requires international students enrolled at institutions that are adopting a hybrid approach this fall, like the Regents universities, offering a combination of both online and in-person classes, to take the minimum number of online classes necessary for their degree while taking the rest of their classes in person. This is a reversal of the March 13th guidance from the Student and Exchange Visitor Program, which allowed international students to remain in the U.S. or return to their home country while maintaining their visa status due to the COVID-19 global pandemic. Further, if our universities must move to entirely online instruction during the semester in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which the University of Iowa has announced to do post Thanksgiving break, international students will be forced to leave the country, or transfer to a different institution.

This guidance creates uncertainty for our international students both in their ability to maintain their visa status, and when they would be allowed back into the U.S. In addition to the harmful impact on our international students, the administrative burden for institutions to issue new I-20s and SEVIS records for all international students is problematic and unrealistic. This ruling comes a mere five weeks before the start of the fall semester, as our institutions are already fully engaged in preparing the safest living, learning, and working environments possible.

In five months, the global health pandemic inflicted an estimate of at least \$150 million in net financial losses to our universities. Similar to our peer institutions nationwide, the challenges we navigate in the midst of the pandemic remain great. We are dedicated to both the health and education of all our students. In order to promote what is best for each individual student, we will need more flexibility for the coming academic year, not less, and to ensure our international students are able to remain as welcomed and valued members of our campus communities.

We respectfully urge for the immediate rescission of the new ICE guidance affecting M-1 and F-1 visa holders. Thank you for your careful consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,



Wendy Wintersteen
President
Iowa State University



J. Bruce Harreld
President
University of Iowa



Mark A. Nook
President
University of Northern Iowa