



## **Joint Statement of Principles in Support of International Education**

### ***Reengaging the World to Make the United States Stronger at Home: A Renewed U.S. Commitment to International Education***

#### **Summary:**

The United States cannot afford to be absent from the world stage: U.S. leadership and engagement makes an essential difference abroad, as well as at home. Indeed, in today's interconnected world, our foreign and domestic policies are inextricably intertwined in pursuit of a preeminent goal – improving the lives of the American people.

Many of our most pressing challenges are inherently global in scope and impact and can only be addressed by nations and individuals working together. From tackling pandemics and the climate crisis, to reducing economic disparities and building prosperity, to countering threats to democracy and maintaining peace – resolving these global challenges requires partnership and collaboration across borders. It is imperative that we continue to cooperate with our allies, invest in our relationships, and broaden our engagement worldwide.

The robust exchange of students, researchers, scholars, and educators, along with broader international educational efforts between the United States and other countries, strengthens relationships between current and future leaders. These relationships are necessary to address shared challenges, enhance American prosperity, and contribute to global peace and security.

U.S. students, researchers, scholars, and educators benefit when they engage with peers from around the world, whether overseas or through international education at home. All Americans need to be equipped with global and cultural competencies to navigate the ever-changing landscapes of education, international business, scientific discovery and innovation, and the global economy. International education enhances cultural and linguistic diversity, and helps to develop cross-cultural communication skills, foreign language competencies, and enhanced self-awareness and understanding of diverse perspectives.

#### **Action:**

We propose the following principles to guide our approach to international education. We recognize that the U.S. government has a unique role in international education because of its responsibility to the American people; its purview over foreign affairs, national security, and economic and border policy; its capacity to provide national and global leadership; and its role in affecting how the United States is perceived globally.

As U.S. federal agencies involved in different aspects of international education, we commit to undertaking actions to support a renewed focus on international education. We will seek to:

- 1) Participate in a coordinated national approach to international education, including study in the United States by international students, researchers, and scholars; study abroad for Americans; international research collaboration; and the internationalization of U.S. campuses and classrooms.
- 2) Emphasize the U.S. government's commitment to support key facets of international education, in partnership with U.S. higher education institutions, schools, state and local governments, non-governmental entities, the business community, and other stakeholders.
- 3) Incorporate a strong focus on international education as part of the nation's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic in order to build back better at home, maintain U.S. global leadership, and promote equitable access to the benefits of international education.
- 4) Welcome international students, researchers, scholars, and educators to the United States in a safe and secure manner and encourage a diversity of participants, disciplines, and types of authorized schools and higher education institutions where they can choose to study, teach, or contribute to research.
- 5) Encourage U.S. students, researchers, scholars, and educators who reflect the diversity of the U.S. population to pursue overseas study, internships, research, and other international experiences.
- 6) Recognize the significant benefits that international students, researchers, scholars, and exchange alumni contribute to research, innovation, economic development, and job opportunities in many fields and sectors throughout the United States.
- 7) Promote expanded access to international education, including through the use of technology where in-person experiences are not feasible, to connect U.S. students, researchers, scholars, and educators with their peers abroad.
- 8) Implement policies, procedures, and protocols so as to facilitate international education and authorized practical experiences while promoting program integrity and protecting national security. Clearly communicate policy guidance and implement fair, efficient and transparent support processes while maintaining national security and upholding the law.
- 9) Leverage existing international education programs and resources and create new opportunities to broaden access and underpin U.S. excellence and leadership.
- 10) Foster increased cooperation between the federal government, the private sector, and educational institutions so as to maintain the integrity of federally funded and protected intellectual property and research endeavors from undue foreign influence and unlawful acquisition.

### **Context and Rationale:**

At several key points in U.S. history, prompted by urgent domestic and global developments, the nation has benefitted from strong U.S. government leadership in actively promoting international education and exchange. In the wake of World War II, Congress created the Fulbright Programs for international education and exchange. The launch of the Sputnik satellite by the then-Soviet Union in 1957 resulted in U.S. legislation that created model international programs in U.S. higher education. Just a few years later, President John F. Kennedy established the Peace Corps

for U.S. volunteers to serve in developing nations. Over the past two decades, the 9/11 terrorist attacks, economic challenges, cybersecurity threats, migration crises, climate change, and the COVID-19 pandemic have brought into stark relief that we are at another critical juncture. It is vital to reinforce our people-to-people relationships around the globe and to strengthen the infrastructure and pathways that help prepare Americans in all sectors to engage with the world.

### *Enhancing National Security and the Economy*

International education benefits the national security of the United States. It supports U.S. diplomacy by promoting people-to-people ties that create goodwill and mutual understanding, while also advancing the security of the American people. Our national security is bolstered when we lead with our strengths, where in a globally competitive environment the United States remains the partner of choice and the pacesetter in research and innovation, even as we mitigate risks from malign actors. Whether these people-to-people ties are formed by international students in the United States, U.S. students studying abroad, faculty efforts, university partnerships, virtual exchanges, or other forms of engagement, these activities strengthen our ability to build alliances and lasting relationships in government, business and trade, science, and innovation, as well as the arts and culture.

International education also contributes significantly to the U.S. economy, job creation, and innovation. The most immediate economic impact of international education derives from the presence of international students on U.S. campuses and in the surrounding communities. In 2020, international students contributed over \$39 billion to the U.S. economy, making U.S. education the nation's 6<sup>th</sup> largest services export, supporting an estimated 415,000 American jobs.

### *Benefitting American Students and Communities*

International education and internationalization in academic offerings help American students understand the interdependence and interconnections within global systems. In addition, the presence of international students, researchers, and scholars on U.S. campuses enhances diversity, contributes to academic vibrancy, and fosters creativity and innovation in the sciences and the arts.

International education also provides insights about the global ramifications of local and national events. As a result, students develop their critical thinking skills and learn to draw conclusions that take a range of viewpoints into consideration. Exposing students to a diversity of thought and experiences is a hallmark of the U.S. education system. Students engaged in international experiences, like study abroad, develop additional socioemotional skills, including greater resiliency, an increased capacity to innovate, and the ability to deal with unfamiliar environments. This both benefits students and also enriches their communities and their campuses when they return.

### *Strengthening U.S. Higher Education*

The U.S. higher education sector is among our most precious assets as a nation. Its scope, diversity and creativity are unmatched by any other higher education system worldwide. Additionally, U.S. campuses support faculty-student dialogue and the free expression of ideas,

cultivating democratic values and active citizenship among U.S. and international students, creating a stronger nation, and building alliances with citizens of other countries.

The U.S. higher education system has had to demonstrate remarkable flexibility and resourcefulness in addressing the unique challenges of the pandemic, especially for international students in the United States and American students who were abroad during the outbreak. As the health crisis recedes, we need to restore and further strengthen the capacity of our higher education institutions, including their critical, ongoing role in the provision of international education and care of international students.

### *Supporting Research and Innovation – Our Competitive Edge*

International students, researchers, scholars, and exchange alumni contribute to the long-term economic health and competitiveness of the U.S. economy. They make significant contributions to U.S. innovation through their research and academic work and their subsequent professional collaboration, in fields that range from cutting-edge digital technologies to the development of the COVID-19 vaccines. In addition, international students, researchers, and scholars who gain practical experience in the United States after graduation benefit U.S. businesses through their multicultural perspectives, linguistic skills, and academic training, particularly in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

While the United States remains the top host nation of international students in the world due to its quality of education and diverse offerings, other countries, including our closest partners and allies, are now aggressively competing with the United States to host those students. This competition—especially from nations that are not our allies and do not share our values—represents a direct challenge to U.S. leadership in research and innovation, our ability to tackle common global concerns, and our capacity to effectively champion universal values, such as human rights, the rule of law, and equity and tolerance, on the global stage.

It is imperative that the United States continue to lead the world and remain the destination of choice for talented international students, researchers, scholars, and educators. International students make a critical contribution to a foreign policy that serves the interests of the American people.