

ATTRACT AND RETAIN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT TALENT

Attracting the best and the brightest students from around the world contributes immeasurably to U.S. preeminence in academic research and scientific innovation. However, trends indicate our country is losing this valuable resource as other countries implement more welcoming policies.

NAFSA's economic analysis of the 2021-2022 academic year showed international students contributed \$33.8 billion and supported 335,423 jobs in the U.S. economy. This dollar amount is up more than \$5.5 billion (or 19%) compared to the prior academic year, however, this increase should be contrasted with the decline of \$10.3 billion in the previous academic year. This means the United States has only regained about half the ground we lost. These totals still fall short of the high-water mark set in the 2018-2019 academic year when more than 1 million international students generated \$40.5 billion and supported more than 450,000 jobs.

NAFSA attributes the loss of approximately \$2 billion dollars and 10,568 jobs in the 2021-2022 academic year to the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic, coupled with numerous federal policy changes have damaged our country's reputation as the premier destination for international students and scholars. Meanwhile, competitor countries like Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom have updated their laws to attract the best and brightest and are seeing unprecedented enrollment growth as a result. To restore U.S. leadership, policies and laws must be changed.

Ask: Update immigration law to attract international student talent. Congress should:

- **Expand Dual Intent to F-1 Students.** Current immigration law requires applicants for F-1 student visas to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the reviewing U.S. consular officer that they intend to return home after their course of study—i.e., that they do not intend to immigrate to the United States. Yet educated students are exactly the kinds of immigrants we should encourage to stay in the United States. We should not force F-1 students, before they even start their studies, to say that they have no intention of staying and contributing to the United States after they graduate.
- **Create a Direct Path to Green Card for International Graduates of U.S. Colleges and Universities.** There is broad, bipartisan support for creating a clear path to green card status for certain international students graduating from U.S. colleges and universities. To meet our national needs, immigration law should be changed to provide an achievable path to green card status for all advanced degree graduates (master's level and higher) in all fields.

NAFSA Contact:

Heather Stewart, Counsel and Director, Immigration Policy
heather.stewart@nafsa.org