

**A PRACTICAL GUIDE  
TO SUPPORT  
INTERNATIONAL  
STUDENTS IN THE U.S.  
AMID COVID-19 &  
ANTI-IMMIGRATION  
POLICIES**

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Special Thanks to *International Mentoring and Orientation Committee (IMOC)*

# DEAR ALLIES,

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a lot of anxiety and uncertainty in the lives of the U.S. international community. In addition, the systemic racism, xenophobia, and barriers put in place by the current administration's Presidential Proclamation issued on June 22, 2020 in regards to immigration and recent ICE Restrictions on International Students announced on July 6, 2020 (and were rescinded on July 14) have further exacerbated the fear, anxiety, and uncertainty felt by the international community.

The International Section of Society of Counseling Psychology (ICP) urges everyone - training programs, faculty, practitioners, and students - to advocate for our fellow international students and scholars. **We believe that this is the time we come together and connect as a community to support each other.**

This guide was developed by APA Division 17 International Section (ICP) in response to the recent COVID-19 and anti-immigration policies. **Please use this guide to continue advocating and supporting international students during this difficult time!**

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**International students and scholars are invaluable assets to the U.S.**

# W H Y

## SUPPORT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS & SCHOLARS?

### Culture.

International students and scholars create jobs, enrich classrooms with diverse perspectives, increase domestic students' global competitiveness, and become great foreign policy assets.

### Economy.

International education is the fifth-largest U.S. service sector export. International students studying at U.S. colleges and universities contributed \$45 billion and supported 458,290 jobs to the U.S. economy during the 2018-2019 academic year.

The US economy has lost \$11.8 billion and more than 65,000 jobs due to the continued decline in international student enrollment since 2016.

Check out [NAFSA](#) and this [short video](#) to learn more!

### Education.

International students foster **cultural diversity** on the US campuses, which prepares domestic students to work in an increasingly globalized workplace.

More than half of U.S. universities will not be able to sustain themselves financially without international student enrollment, given that a considerable number of international students attend U.S. universities (e.g., more than 20% of the student bodies in prestigious universities, such as [Harvard](#) (21.1%) and [MIT](#) (28.9%), are international students).

Despite these advantages, the recent Presidential Proclamation and Regulation, coupled with the long history of anti-immigration efforts in the U.S. that scapegoats the international community ([Denvir, 2020](#); [Meng, 2017](#); [Young, 2017](#)), have caused doubts, fears, and frustration within the community. For example, 87% international students and scholars reported that they now have less desire to study in the U.S. because they feel less safe and less welcome in the U.S.

Now, international students and scholars worry about their families' and their own health and unstable visa status in addition to racism and xenophobia in the midst of a pandemic. **It's time for you to support international students and scholars!**

# VISA KEYWORDS

International students and scholars juggle with numerous documents **just to maintain their status** and study/work in the U.S. While guiding them to the International Services Offices is a wise decision, it is also imperative that we all inform ourselves what types of visas and opportunities are out there. **Learn some keywords to better understand international students' visa concerns!**

## F-1 Visa.

An "Academic Student Visa" that allows students to attend U.S. schools as a full-time student. F-1 students can work on-campus under certain conditions and restrictions.

## M-1 Visa.

A "Vocational Student Visa" that allows students to participate in vocational or other nonacademic programs.

## J-1 Visa.

A "Exchange Visitor Visa" for work and study related exchange programs.

## H-1B Visa.

A "Work Visa" that allows US companies to employ foreign workers with a bachelor's degree or higher in specialty occupations.

## H-1B Cap Gap Extension.

The H-1B Cap Gap Extension allows certain students with pending or approved H-1B petitions to remain in the U.S. in F-1 status until the start date of their approved H-1B employment period (even if the OPT authorization and/or F-1 grace period would have otherwise expired before October 1).

**\*For more specific and complex immigration-related questions, please direct the students/scholars to international student and scholar services on campus AND follow up to offer support!**

## OPT.

Optional Practical Training (OPT) allows F-1 students to gain hands-on work experience related to the academic field of study. Students may apply for the 24-month STEM OPT extension if they are pursuing qualifying STEM degrees (or their degrees have eligible CIP Codes).

## CPT.

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) allows F-1 students to participate in an internship, practicum or cooperative education program during their studying. One year of full-time CPT ELIMINATES a student's eligibility for OPT.

[Click here to get started on advocacy work!](#)



# TAKE ACTION, BECOME ALLIES

## Check-in.

Avoid asking, “How are you?”

Instead, ask “How can I support you right now?” or “Have you been able to find time for rest?”

## Share.

Share this guide with your peers and colleagues and start a conversation. Take the advocacy steps below.

## Educate.

Email and tweet at your Senators and Representative about the dollars, jobs, academic and cultural benefits international students bring to your state.

## Impact.

Ask members of Congress to make floor statements in support of International Students. Get a sample request letter and email to your Member of Congress (click here to find your representative).

## Communicate.

Urge Congress to support international students & scholars and protect OPT. Submit your information and send a sample message to your lawmakers to support the international community.

“Take proactive actions to support int’l students & scholars.”

Educate yourself with the latest information and gather timely resources for international students and scholars related to COVID-19. Share information and resources with your colleagues and fellow international students and scholars.

# BE INFORMED, SHARE INFORMATION

## Visa & Entry

### Check.

Check the latest information on [COVID-19 Travel Restrictions by Country](#), [the recent APA webinar](#) to learn about how COVID-19 affects visa status, OPT, H-1B visa, etc.

### Advise.

Despite the delays in the U.S. Visa process, advise incoming international students **NOT TO ENTER THE U.S. WITH A TRAVEL VISA.** Doing so may cause serious issues with the legality of their visa status.

### Learn.

Read NAFSA's [COVID-19 Restrictions on U.S. Visas and Entry](#) and [COVID-19 resources](#). Be aware that both the work visa suspension (i.e., H-1B) and the [rescinded restrictions](#) on international students have negatively affected the international community.

## Academia

### For Grad Students & Postdocs

### Encourage.

Encourage international students to stay on track with their program requirements

### Resources.

- [APA COVID-19 Information & Resources](#)
- [APA Webinars - Staying on Track During a Pandemic](#)
- [National Postdoctoral Association](#) - Check out their resources including [International Postdoctoral Survival Guide](#)

## Financial Concerns

- International students are **not eligible for the** CARES Act Funds and Stimulus Check. They are also not eligible for Work-Study positions on campus or other federal funded scholarships (e.g., APA Minority Fellowship).
- Similarly, international scholars (i.e., faculty/staff/employees) are not eligible to receive unemployment benefits and the CARES Act Funds.

## Severe Economic Hardship

If international students are suffering a severe economic hardship due to unforeseen changes, they may apply to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for authorization to work off-campus. **Check in with international student and scholar services on campus and see if they have emergency funds specifically for international students.**

## Explore Resources.

**Some international students** (particularly graduate students) **cannot earn their tuition/stipends because they cannot travel to the U.S.** Check in with your students or peers about whether/how their GAship may be impacted if they cannot enter the U.S. (e.g., “I heard about this policy impacting international students’ GAship if they cannot enter the U.S., and I wondered if you may be affected by this.”).

Look for what and how your school/department offer any financial aids or scholarships for international students who cannot enter the U.S. for the Fall 2020 term, cannot work as a GA/TA/RA, and experience financial hardships due to COVID-19. **Reach out to your school/department** and ask about COVID-19 emergency funds for international students.



**APA Division 17**

**International Section (ICP)**

**Click to view Tips & Resources for  
International Students in the U.S.!**

**August 2020**