



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF GRADUATE-PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS

June 21, 2013

Speaker of the House John Boehner
1011 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Boehner,

I am writing on behalf of the National Association of Graduate- Professional Students (NAGPS) and the 600,000 graduate and professional students we represent across the United States on more than 90 campuses. I wish to express my sincere gratitude for all you have done to find a bipartisan solution to our nation's immigration problems.

Our nation boasts the finest opportunities for higher education in the world. Thus, it is no surprise that we attract the best and brightest international students to our institutes of higher education. In 2011, approximately 15% of graduate students were foreign nationals and these numbers continue to increase as universities accept an increasing number of international students^{1,2}.

Our nation's international graduate and professional students are members of our communities, leaders within their universities, and contributors to the growth and development of our nation. In 2011, 36% of all science and engineering PhDs were awarded to foreign nationals at U.S. universities. In 2011-2012 international students contributed \$21.8 billion to the U.S. economy, \$717.3 million to the state of Ohio, and \$41.1 million in the 8th district of Ohio³. At the same time, 76% of all patents from America's top 10 patent-generating universities had a foreign born inventor⁴.

NAGPS supports immigration reform that values the contributions made by our nation's international and undocumented DREAM Act students. As you work, NAGPS wishes to express our platform and requests that you consider the following recommendations.

1) Increase the number of H1-B visas for U.S. educated foreign nationals.

Currently, the number of H1-B visas available to U.S. educated foreign nationals with advanced degrees is inadequate. While nearly three-fourths of all foreign doctoral recipients plan to stay in the United States to find employment (and to contribute to the growth of the American economy), the five and ten year stay rates for these students are estimated at 64% and 66%⁵. Visa caps have consistently been reached in recent years, and only a small portion of green cards go to professionals with advanced degrees. We encourage you to expand the number of H1-B visas and green cards available for foreign nationals that have received any advanced degree in the United States and we are supportive of the measures in S. 744 to do so.

2) Allow for student visa renewal within the United States.

Currently Section 4103 (c)(2) of S.744 allows for the renewal of a number of visas within the United States. Unfortunately, this does not include type F and J student visas. Renewing visas can be extremely costly and time consuming for international students. Currently, they are obligated to travel back to their home countries because there is no option to renew visas within the United States. Allowing for student visa renewals in the United States could minimize costs associated with visa renewals overseas, and importantly, allow for more robust security and oversight of visa renewals within the United States. The experience and expertise of domestic State Department and Department of Homeland Security officials provides for greater security throughout the visa revalidation process. Providing F and J visa holders with the option of domestic revalidation also has the potential to drastically reduce the cost and workload on our foreign consulates.

NAGPS member schools:

Arizona State University
Arkansas State University
Armstrong Atlantic State University
Auburn University
Baylor University
Bentley University
Boston University
Bryn Mawr College
Carnegie Mellon University
Case Western Reserve University
Chatham University
Colorado School of Mines
Colorado State University
Columbia University
Cornell University
Drexel University
Duke University
East Carolina University
East Tennessee State University
Eastern Illinois University
Emerson College
Florida Atlantic University
Florida International University
Florida State University
George Mason University
Grand Valley State University
Harvard University
High Point University
Johns Hopkins University
Kent State University
Loyola University Maryland
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Missouri University of Science and Technology
North Carolina State University
Northern Arizona University
Northwestern University
Ohio State University
Oklahoma State University
Old Dominion University
Pennsylvania State University
Regent University
Rice University
Southern University
St. Cloud State University
St. Louis University
Stony Brook University
Syracuse University
Texas A&M University
Texas Tech University
Tufts University
University of Akron
University of Alabama, Birmingham
University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa
University of Arizona
University of Arkansas, Little Rock
University of California
University of California, Davis
University of California, Irvine
University of California, Merced
University of California, San Diego
University of Central Florida
University of Cincinnati
University of Colorado
University of Florida
University of Georgia
University of Louisville
University of Maryland, Baltimore County
University of Maryland, College Park
University of Miami
University of Mississippi
University of Missouri
University of Missouri, St. Louis
University of Montana
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
University of Nevada, Reno
University of New England
University of New Haven
University of North Texas
University of Notre Dame
University of Oklahoma
University of Pittsburgh
University of Puerto Rico Rio Piedras Campus
University of South Dakota
University of South Florida
University of Southern California
University of Tennessee Knoxville
University of Toledo
Virginia Commonwealth University
Washington State University
Washington University in St. Louis
Western Michigan University
Xavier University

3) Utilize a STEM definition that includes the biological sciences.

NAGPS strongly supports a STEM definition in line with the one currently used by The Department of Homeland Security (DHS). In April 2008, foreign students who graduated from a United States institution of higher education with certain STEM degrees became eligible for an extended period of optional practical training. This list of STEM degrees, expanded in 2012, is known as the STEM Designated Degree Program List. The DHS STEM list includes the biological sciences and NAGPS supports using this designation in S. 744.

4) Allow international student travel for professional development.

In addition to visa renewals, international students face problems with professional development outside the United States during their time of study. They are often unable to attend international conferences because of visa restrictions or fear that they will not be able to re-enter the country. This prevents many talented individuals from presenting the results of their research and improving their professional development⁶. Since many international students will remain in the United States and contribute to our economy, it is in the best interest of our nation to allow them the greatest opportunities to improve their professional experience and urge for provisions within a student visa for professional development outside the United States.

5) Recognize the contribution of DREAM Act eligible students.

Our nation's graduate and professional students also include those students who are undocumented, many of whom have been raised as Americans and attended our public schools and universities. These students deserve the opportunity to work and contribute as American citizens to the country they consider home. For undocumented graduate and professional students, their status compromises their capacity to receive scholarships, fellowships and loans. Ultimately, these funding barriers can compromise the attainment of advanced degrees to better themselves and our nation. We encourage you to provide a pathway to citizenship for our nation's undocumented students that acknowledge the contributions they have already made to our country and the difficulties they have endured. We are supportive of the current pathway to citizenship laid out in S. 744.

Thank you again for your continued efforts to move our nation forward with comprehensive immigration reform. Should you wish to speak with NAGPS further regarding graduate and professional student issues please don't hesitate to contact me.

With sincere thanks,



Meredith Niles
PhD Candidate, University of California, Davis
Director of Legislative Affairs, National Association of Graduate-Professional Students

[1] <http://chronicle.com/article/Admissions-Offers-to-Foreign/128700/>

[2] <http://chronicle.com/article/US-Graduate-Schools-Sec/129679/>

[3] NAFSA Association of International Educators. The Economic Benefits of International Students to the U.S. Economy Academic Year 2011-2012.

[4] "Patent Pending: How Immigrants Are Reinventing the American Economy." Partnership for a New American Economy.
<http://www.renewoureconomy.org/patent-pending>

[5] Finn, M.G. 2012. Stay Rates of Foreign Doctorate Recipients from U.S. Universities, 2009. Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education.
<http://orise.ora.gov/files/sep/stay-rates-foreign-doctorate-recipients-2009.pdf>

[6] Chiu, L.S. Visa Delays Put Science Careers at Risk. August 14, 2009. Science Careers Magazine.