

Connecting Our World

be a voice of international education

Be A Voice, Be Counted – Talking Points to Help Grow Your Community



Every person we interact with is someone we can touch with a message about international education. The Connecting Our World community knows that international education changes the world and deserves our support, but **others may not see why it should matter to them**, or they may even disagree with our point of view.

It's up to all of us to engage them. **Why should you do this?** Because the more voices we have speaking out, the more we can do to make sure that our young people, our schools, our cities, and our global community continue to benefit from international education. Also, influencing government leaders and public opinion are not easy tasks – it's a long, hard road and many other groups are organizing to be heard. Some of those groups present a point of view that isn't favorable to our values. We need to be able to speak with an equally compelling voice about the things that matter to us.

Use these talking points to engage your friends, neighbors, colleagues, students and others in your community. Remember: *anyone* can be a member of Connecting Our World.

Everyone can be a voice. This is your community. Be part of making it stronger.

NAFSA: ASSOCIATION OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATORS

Connecting Our World is powered by NAFSA and its 10,000 members worldwide, who believe that international education - connecting students, scholars, educators, and citizens across borders - is fundamental to advancing peace, security, and well-being. Learn more about NAFSA at www.nafsa.org.



www.connectingourworld.org

Talking Points: Spreading the Word and Recruiting New Members

The more voices we have speaking out, the more we can do to support international education. Use these talking points to spread the word about the value of international education and why people should join Connecting Our World:

- **What is international education and exchange?** It is about connecting students, scholars, educators, and citizens across borders. Foreign students on U.S. college campuses. Study abroad, cultural exchanges, and service-learning programs. Foreign language learning and research partnerships among countries. All of these and more are part of international education.
- **Why should someone care about international education?** Learning that happens across borders or cultures changes the world. It brings us closer to each other as a global community because it broadens our perspectives about people and issues, whether personal or professional. And it makes us stronger problem-solvers – as individuals and as countries - because it helps us understand that diverse viewpoints are valuable and teaches us the skills we need to work together.
- **What is Connecting Our World?** It is a grassroots community of people who believe in the importance of international education or have been impacted some aspect of it. They want to join together with a growing movement and speak out about public policies that affect international education.
- Despite worries about the economy and jobs, a recent public opinion poll (<http://www.nafsa.org/OpinionSurvey>) shows that **Americans believe in the importance of international education** – especially learning foreign languages, study abroad, and learning about the world. What Americans said:
 - 73% believe that colleges need to do a better job of teaching students about the world, or they won't be prepared for the global economy.
 - 65% believe that if students don't learn foreign languages, they will be at a competitive disadvantage in their careers.
 - 57% believe international education is essential to the educational experience.
- By joining Connecting Our World, you will receive e-mails so that you are kept up-to-date on the issues and will be called to action throughout the year to write to your elected officials. Keep an eye out for action alerts and legislative updates in your e-mail.
- Connecting Our World makes it easy for you to **contact your elected officials** about the international education issues that are important to you. The letter is already written, so all you have to do is personalize it, if you want to, and fill in your contact information. A few minutes is all it takes to make your voice heard.
- **Connecting Our World** is where you can:
 - participate in ongoing advocacy [campaigns](#)
 - [send letters to your elected officials](#)
 - bring the issues to life by [sharing a story](#)
 - get the latest news about policies affecting international education
 - read and comment on blog posts
 - spread the word and engage in conversations through social media

Talking Points: Why Immigration Policy Matters to Us

- When it comes to immigration reform, most people think first of *illegal* immigration, but right now U.S. policies that determine who can *legally* come here, for how long, and for what purpose are working against us. They keep out too many talented people who want to contribute their skills to our communities and businesses. They make it hard for foreign students who earn degrees from our universities to stay here to put their knowledge to use. They make it very difficult for smart, talented people to make a life here. And they include processes that are too complicated and take too long.
- The idea that foreign workers take jobs from Americans is a myth. In fact, studies have found that the addition of one foreign employee on an H-1B visa, for example, typically triggers the creation of 5 new jobs ("[H1-B Visas and Job Creation](#)," National Foundation for American Policy). This is because employment isn't a zero-sum game – when talented, hard-working people join our businesses, they bring innovative ideas which grow the business and thus create more jobs
- Did you know that some of the most successful companies in the world – Yahoo!, Google, Intel, and eBay, for example – were founded by immigrants? Their success means jobs for hundreds of thousands of Americans, supports the growth and prosperity of American communities, and helps the United States lead the world in innovation and technology. We need immigration policies that encourage this kind of contribution, and we need to get rid of policies that discourage it.
- Did you know that international students and their families are great for our local economy? Nationwide they spend over \$18 billion on tuition, rent, food, and other living expenses (<http://www.nafsa.org/eis>). Without these students, our communities would lose that financial support.
- We need to join together to urge the US Congress to act on immigration reform. It's understandable that individual states are frustrated with the specific challenges related to immigration that they face, but a patchwork of poorly considered policies across the country will only create confusion. The federal government needs to address immigration in a way that is consistent with American values of openness and fairness and that supports America's future in the global economy.
- In the meantime, the DREAM Act will make it possible for thousands of undocumented students who were brought to the United States at a young age to get right with the law and contribute to their communities to the best of their abilities by allowing them access to higher education and military service.

Use a Story to Make Your Point

Stories of real people in your community affected by the broken immigration system will make an impact on people you talk to. Examples could include:

- The problems encountered by international professors, researchers and scholars who are making valuable contributions on your campus and in your community (such as delays in processing for immigration benefits or multi-year green card backlogs). It's important to focus on the human impact of such delays on families, as well as on what is lost to the community when a foreign researcher or scholar decides to leave and go to a country that is more welcoming.
- Stories of the challenges faced by international students in getting visas, coming to the United States, or getting jobs after graduation.
- Stories of how international students and other immigrants are making positive contributions to your community.

Talking Points: Why More Students Should Study Abroad

- Did you know that 80% of students say they would like to study abroad? Unfortunately, only 1% of American college students do each year, and most of them are white and female. Connecting Our World is dedicated to making sure that many more students from all backgrounds have the chance to benefit from study abroad.
- Studying abroad isn't just something that's fun to do if you can afford it. It's essential to every student's preparation for the working world. Employers are looking for graduates who can thrive in an international environment.
- Don't just take our word for it: "...Studying abroad isn't just an important part of a well-rounded educational experience. It's also becoming increasingly important for success in the modern global economy. Getting ahead in today's workplaces isn't just about the skills you bring from the classroom. It's also about the experience you have with the world beyond our borders — with people, and languages, and cultures that are very different from our own." First Lady Michelle Obama, January 19, 2011
- Major corporations like IBM and Deloitte have found that when their employees have the opportunity for an international experience, they return with skills that are vital to advancing the company's success, including greater resilience and cultural awareness, a better understanding of new and emerging markets, and a greater commitment to their day to day work.
- The new divide is a "global divide." A generation ago, there was a concern that students without access to computers would fall behind their peers and be at a competitive disadvantage in seeking jobs, the so-called "digital divide." The same can be said today of students without access to global educational opportunities.
- Study abroad opportunities help students develop practical skills that complement classroom learning, including foreign language fluency, improved problem solving, tolerance for ambiguity, and cross-cultural sensitivity.
- Students studying abroad can act as informal ambassadors for their own countries, break down cultural stereotypes, and create lasting positive relationships around the world.

Use a Story to Make Your Point

Your personal stories will convey the real-world impact of studying abroad and make an impact on people you talk to. Examples could include:

- Stories about your experience studying abroad and how it changed you. What did you learn about the country and about yourself? Studying abroad is often a two-way street of learning – were you able to break down any stereotypes about your own country?
- Stories about how studying abroad affected your career choice, or how your experience abroad and the skills you learned are helping you in your current job.
- If you are an international educator, share a story about a student of yours that came back from studying abroad with a changed world perspective, a new career choice, or an idea for a business.