

International Educators Seek Candidates Who Reflect Our Values

THE 2016 CAMPAIGN has been dominated more by voter outrage than the electorate's vision for the future of the United States. As voters, however, it is not too late to cast aside the flame-throwing rhetoric, the knee-jerk reactions, and the superficial sound bites. When we go to the polls—which we must, if we are eligible—the candidates we support should reflect a positive vision of what our country can be, for us, and for future generations. We cannot allow candidates to use the politics of fear to manipulate voters into violating the very values that make America worthy of respect among ourselves and the world: values of tolerance and understanding; diversity and inclusion of all faiths, ethnicities, and backgrounds; and aspirations of a truly educated citizenry. The leaders we select at all levels of government should stand for ideals that represent the best of America. For those of us involved in international education, such ideals include a United States that is committed to fostering an educated, peaceful, and secure world. An America that sees itself as connected to the global community is a core and constant value in the field of international education, necessary to foster enlightened global engagement, move nations toward greater prosperity, and promote mutual understanding and cooperation. The candidates we select on November 8 must articulate and advance those values to secure the future we envision for our country and our world.

As international educators, our students are our priority. We must choose leaders who understand the importance of education abroad and international learning.

For Our Students and Our Future

As international educators, our students are our priority. We must choose leaders who understand the importance of education abroad and international learning. They must be willing to support efforts to increase the number and diversity of U.S. students who have the transformative opportunities afforded by international education. They must ensure, also, that the United States is welcoming to international students by increasing—rather than limiting—their opportunities to study, live, and work in the United States.

International educators know that with fewer than 10 percent of college graduates benefitting from study abroad each year, we risk creating an international education divide as potentially damaging to our students' chances as the digital divide of decades past. Isolating our students from the languages, cultures, and beliefs of the rest of the world puts them at risk of falling behind in an increasingly global society. Students of color and those with limited financial means are disproportionately denied the study abroad opportunities that would prepare them to participate and compete in a global marketplace, and our elected leaders

must support ways to close the international education gap.

Finding ways to create more internationally literate U.S. students is not an intractable challenge. It simply requires leadership. To ensure international education is not a privilege for the elite but an opportunity for all, the next president and Congress must:

- Prioritize study abroad and other international learning experiences in each annual budget.
- Advocate for the establishment of a federal program, such as the Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Program, to incentivize higher education institutions to increase and diversify study abroad opportunities.
- Support innovative programs such as the 100,000 Strong in the Americas Innovation Fund, to encourage public-private partnerships to advance study abroad.

Because even the most comprehensive policies to advance international education will not guarantee all U.S. students study abroad, our leaders must also:

- Embrace policies that provide U.S. students with multiple opportunities to gain the skills and knowledge they need to thrive in an interconnected world.

Our country must welcome not only those students who wish to study here from abroad, but also those who may wish to continue to work and live in the United States because of the exceptional opportunities here.



■ Support educators in developing courses, curricula, and programs that engage students in the global challenges and global opportunities that characterize our age.

■ Ensure that becoming college educated becomes synonymous with being globally educated.

As the world becomes more interdependent, the local and the global become increasingly entwined. To navigate in this complex environment, U.S. students must have the opportunity to share an integrated learning experience with international students and scholars. Students from outside our borders offer academic, cultural, and economic contributions that extend beyond our campuses to our communities. Our country must welcome not only those students who wish to study here from abroad, but also those who may wish to continue to work and live in the United States because of the exceptional opportunities here.

To continue to attract international students:

■ The next president and Congress must advocate for immigration reform that eliminates the requirement that international students demonstrate they have no intention of staying, working, and contributing to our knowledge economy and local communities after they graduate.

■ Our future leaders must increase the availability of green cards and H-1B visas so that non-Americans who

wish to contribute to our economic growth can do so.

■ Likewise, our policies should embrace the importance of family by permitting spouses and children of international students and scholars to engage in study and work opportunities here.

■ We should expedite the visa process for low-risk, known travelers and embrace technological improvements that improve immigration services.

■ In addition, an administration committed to welcoming international students must develop a proactive recruitment strategy to better attract a more geographically and economically diverse pool of international students.

Supporting policies that welcome international students helps strengthen ties with countries across the globe and enhances our own national security. International students and scholars who have studied in the United States become, at a minimum, informal ambassadors when they return home, sharing an appreciation for common values, counteracting stereotypes about the United States, and enhancing respect for cultural differences. In addition, many of the international students we educate in the United States will go on to become world leaders and some of our closest friends and allies as we endeavor to create a more secure world.

For Our Well-Being and Prosperity

As Americans, each of us seeks leaders who have a positive vision of securing our individual well-being as well as that of society as a whole. As international educators, we believe that our economic prosperity depends upon cross-cultural literacy, mutual understanding and cooperation, and a welcoming United States. We therefore support candidates who understand that globalization demands that U.S. workers have cross-cultural skills to remain competitive in the twenty-first century. Our elected officials must embrace policies to improve global literacy, knowing that it is necessary for the United States to create products and services that are in demand worldwide.

Our future leaders must also recognize that protecting the health of our citizens and our planet mandates cross-cultural cooperation and collaboration. Epidemics don't recognize global borders, our climate is shared by all, and when a catastrophic natural disaster strikes anywhere in the world, it often takes a global effort to rebuild and recover. Isolation diminishes us, and we seek leaders who recognize we are stronger together.

As a nation, our own security is threatened by global unrest. As international educators, we know that we are more secure if we replace fear of the "other" with a willingness to understand the world's languages and cultures, religions, and beliefs. We believe that enlightened foreign policy and diplomacy enhance our national security and contribute to the global fight against terrorism more than saber rattling and military might. We know that when war and extreme poverty far from our shores lead to hopelessness and desperation, we advance our own stability and security when we offer a home and an education to the displaced. We seek leaders who understand that we can take appropriate measures to ensure our country's security while welcoming those most at risk from war and violence. Right now, Syrian refugees are among those who most need our assistance. We therefore seek leaders willing to increase the U.S. commitment to

We must not endure the hypocrisy of accepting an immigration system that, if in place generations ago, would have prevented many of our parents or grandparents from living and working in this country.

resettle Syrian refugees, commensurate with Canada's commitment of at least 100,000; who are willing to streamline the visa process for Syrian students; and who are willing to invest in education for displaced students who remain in neighboring countries.

For Our Values

As citizens of one of the most diverse countries in the world, we have often struggled to appreciate and understand each other's differences and provide opportunities for all. Yet part of what makes us extraordinary is that with each generation, the vast majority of us strive to become more welcoming, more understanding, and less fearful. We must demand leaders who value diversity, rather than fan the flame of hatred; who respect our tradition as a nation of immigrants, rather than pander to our lesser instincts of xenophobia and racism; and who deliberate and collaborate, rather than demagogue and dictate. Our leaders must work to alleviate the current climate of heightened suspicion that permeates our workplaces, our shopping malls, our airports, our universities, and even our elementary schools. Besides extinguishing the rhetoric that sends an unwelcoming and uninformed signal to the world, our leaders must take concrete actions to demonstrate our commitment to creating a more welcoming and globally engaged United States.

One of the most reliable political indicators of a United States that is welcoming is support for commonsense immigration solutions. We must not endure the hypocrisy of accepting an immigration system that, if in place generations ago, would have prevented many of our parents or grandparents from living and working in this country. The next president and Congress must:

- Champion comprehensive immigration reform that allows individuals freedom of movement and reflects our values as a nation.
- Work together to restart the process of ensuring citizenship for DREAMers, individuals who were brought to the United

States as children, attended school here, and identify themselves as American.

Recent positive steps toward normalizing relations with Cuba have begun the process of repairing our relationship with our close hemispheric neighbor, while preserving our belief that citizens of the United States should have the freedom to travel. Our future leaders must continue to build on that positive momentum by supporting legislation that would end the travel ban and trade embargo that still exist, and that make Cuba the only country in the world that the U.S. government prevents its citizens from visiting without restrictions. This has an impact not only on our own freedom of movement, but also is the right policy for the Cuban people and to advance our nation's relations in the hemisphere.

We understand that who we elect as our leaders in government tells the rest of the world what we think about them, and about each other. We must strive to elevate the level of our political discourse so it reflects our aspirations to be united in our respect for all people. Intolerance and divisiveness threaten to unravel the fabric of our country, which derives its strength from our myriad cultures, ideas, and traditions. We will vote for leaders who will not embrace hatred, pander to fear, or let superficial differences of skin color or native language divide us. We will vote for leaders who believe our country is strongest when it fosters openness, cooperation, and collaboration. We will vote for leaders who understand that we are stronger together, and that our history as a nation that welcomes immigrants has been key to our success. We will elect leaders who focus on the importance of diversity and inclusion, and understand that humility, rather than arrogance, is the best way to ensure our mutual security. Only then can we aspire to the promise of an America that can help lead all of us to a more secure and prosperous world. **IE**

MARLENE M. JOHNSON is CEO and executive director of NAFSA: Association of International Educators.