

## Congressional Meeting Road Map 2025

### Outline for a Successful Meeting

#### 1. Before the Meeting:

Decide among your group who will take which role(s), depending on group size, i.e., team lead, storyteller, stats/fact keeper, “ask-maker,” packet-holder, timekeeper, etc. ***If your meeting group includes non-constituents, the team lead should be a constituent.*** Be clear who in your group will ensure the packet of leave-behind materials (one packet per office) is put in the hands of the staffer.

#### 2. Make the Opening:

- a. Individual introductions. Be sure the first advocate to speak (this should be your team lead) references association with NAFSA. NOTE: If more than three participants, have the team lead make an introduction on behalf of the group for expediency, including pointing out others who are constituents. You are welcome to reference your employer if you are comfortable doing so, but make it clear you are here representing NAFSA (unless you have direct permission to speak on behalf of your employer also).
  - i. Ex. *“My name is and I’m a constituent from X. We’re here today on behalf of NAFSA, the world’s largest and most comprehensive international education professional association. Together we work to advance policies and practices that equip students with the global knowledge and skills they need to succeed in today’s interconnected world.”*
- b. Make a personal connection with the staffer and gauge their awareness of international education through questions such as:
  - i. *“Do you have any personal connection to international education--did you study abroad or know someone who has? Did you have classes with international students in college?”*
  - ii. *“Are you from the state/district?”*
- c. Set the intention for the meeting and flag the asks upfront.
  - i. Ex. *“Our goal for this meeting is to convey why international education is important to U.S. economic and national security, and urge **your support for policy solutions and federal funding** that would make the U.S. safer, stronger, and more prosperous. Specifically, we are here to ask your boss to help restore and sustain funding for international education and exchange programs at the U.S. Departments of State and Education, and support policies that attract global student talent.”*

### 3. Transition to the Moment We're In

*Ex. "Let me begin by sharing why the U.S government's investment in international education is so important to U.S. workforce development, economic strength, and global competitiveness and why its abandonment of federal international education programs is so damaging."*

### 4. The ECA Funding Freeze / Department of Education Talking Points, Data & Stories:

- a. On February 12, congressionally appropriated funds for study abroad and international exchange programs at the Department of State WERE FROZEN.
- b. On March 11, the entire staff of the Office of International and Foreign Language Education at the DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION WAS ELIMINATED.
- c. Though the funding freeze has started to thaw, future funding uncertainty and staffing cuts THREATEN THESE LONG-STANDING PROGRAMS AND UNDERMINE AMERICA'S ECONOMIC STRENGTH AND NATIONAL SECURITY.
- d. The U.S. needs globally competent graduates with THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE AND CROSS-CULTURAL SKILLS needed to lead in international diplomacy, business, cybersecurity, and research.
- e. Study abroad experiences provided by Fulbright and Gilman and language and area studies provide U.S. students and scholars with THE GLOBAL SKILLS THEY NEED TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN TODAY'S WORLD.
- f. **[REFER TO FACT SHEET]**
- g. DESPITE THESE PROVEN BENEFITS, ONLY TEN PERCENT OF COLLEGE STUDENTS STUDY ABROAD.
- h. WITHOUT FEDERAL SUPPORT FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION, THIS PERCENTAGE WILL FALL FURTHER, RISKING U.S. COMPETITIVENESS IN AN INCREASINGLY INTERCONNECTED WORLD. A retreat from the global stage creates a vacuum that could easily be filled by competitor countries.
- i. **[Insert story demonstrating how these programs help prepare students for the future and how the current squeeze on funding /funding cuts imperil these programs]**

### 5. Transition to International Student and Scholar Issues

*Ex. "U.S. students also benefit from having international students and scholars in their classrooms, on their campuses, and in their communities. Recent executive actions along with visa and immigration policies that make it harder for them to*

*follow their dreams to the United States hurts our national security, economic vitality, and workforce development.”*

## 6. International Student and Scholar Talking Points, Data, and Stories

- a. International students, scholars, and their families bring SIGNIFICANT ACADEMIC, CULTURAL, and ECONOMIC BENEFITS to the United States.
- b. They ENRICH THE PERSPECTIVES OF U.S. STUDENTS, DRIVE INNOVATION in our workplaces, and CONTRIBUTE TO THEIR LOCAL COMMUNITIES.
- c. [REFER TO FACT SHEET]
- d. [Insert story demonstrating how international students enrich U.S. students' learning environment or have made an important contribution to their campus/community]
  - i. [IF YOU WANT TO SAY MORE: A former international student from India developed the technology to compress video data, making possible the advent of Zoom and Facetime]
- e. International students contributed more than \$43 BILLION to our economy in the 2023-24 academic year and supported MORE THAN 378,000 JOBS.
  - i. [REFERENCE JOBS/ECON VALUE DATA FOR YOUR STATE OR DISTRICT at [www.nafsa.org/economicvalue](http://www.nafsa.org/economicvalue). This information will also be in the Advocacy Day app under “Talking Points” and in the packet of materials you will leave behind]
- f. At less than 6 percent of total U.S. college enrollment, international students make OUTSIZED CONTRIBUTIONS TO OUR ECONOMY AND SOCIETY. Yet an OUTDATED IMMIGRATION SYSTEM and INEFFICIENT VISA PROCESSING, in addition to harmful executive actions that INVOLVE EXTREME VETTING, push them toward other countries.

## 7. Transition to the “Asks:”

Ex. “Which leads us to make these specific asks of (you/your boss). I have two issue brief documents that I’d like to share with you that go into more detail about these asks.”

## 8. The Asks:

- a. To attract and retain international student talent that helps fuel our economy, innovation, and workforce development, we urge support for:
  - i. USING CONGRESSIONAL AUTHORITY to ensure SECURE AND EFFICIENT VISA AND IMMIGRATION BENEFIT PROCESSING

- ii. CREATING A PATH TO A GREEN CARD for international student graduates and
  - iii. EXTENDING DUAL INTENT for F-1 students to allow issuance of F visas even if the student expresses a desire to remain in the U.S. after graduating.
  - iv. [REFER TO ISSUE BRIEF],
- b. To boost our economy, strengthen the global skills of our workforce, and bolster U.S. national security, we urge support for
  - i. USING CONGRESSIONAL AUTHORITY TO RESTORE FUNDS TO STATE DEPARTMENT INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS as dictated by law and
  - ii. ENSURE THE PROTECTION AND FUNDING OF FEDERAL INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS in FY2026. [REFER to ISSUE BRIEF]. This includes:
    - a. Preserving and sustaining programs under the State Department's BUREAU OF EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS, including: EDUCATIONUSA OVERSEAS ADVISING CENTERS that help ATTRACT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS to study in the United States;
    - b. Preserving and sustaining funding for the Education Department's TITLE VI and FULBRIGHT-HAYS programs.

**9. Thank You and Follow-Up:**

- a. Send a thank you email to the staff as a follow up, either from all of you, or individually.
- b. Some offices may request that advocates submit an appropriations form. If so, please note that in the Meeting Summary Form and we will provide guidance on a case-by-case basis.
- c. Complete the Advocacy Day evaluation survey (in the Advocacy Day app)
- d. Make sure whoever agreed to complete the Meeting Summary Form for each of your meetings does so. Those links are available in the Advocacy Day app.

**If you are asked about student arrests:**

### **1. Articulate the impact**

*As international educators, we have a responsibility to support the safety and success of ALL international students in our care. It is important for students to comply with the responsibilities of their nonimmigrant status and to take that seriously. Arrests of students have sent a chilling message throughout our community and generated a tremendous amount of fear and uncertainty. This is harmful to the students' psychological safety and threatens their rights to participate freely in our academic environment. It also sends a message to prospective students that this is not a safe country in which to study.*

### **2. Express your support for freedom of expression**

*Freedom of speech and the right to protest is an important foundational right in the United States. I'm proud that these values help attract students from around the world to our shores. It is a rare privilege to be able to speak freely in opposition to government. No person's right to speech or protest should be more important than another person's safety and right to a conducive learning environment. Unfortunately, the government has not explained how protestors are a threat to others and our nation.*

### **3. What the Representative/Senator/staff can do to support**

*It is incumbent upon the administration to be forthcoming and transparent about these arrests. Providing compelling and sound rationale for the arrests will ensure international students and the larger public have confidence that individual rights are being respected and that government actions have been taken in the interest of safety. It would also help international students better understand how to comply with the responsibilities of being a nonimmigrant in this country.*