July 8, 2020

Esther D. Brimmer, DPhil
Executive Director & CEO
NAFSA: Association of International Educators
1307 New York Avenue NW, 8th Floor
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Dr. Brimmer:

Thank you for your March 16, 2020 letter to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Acting Secretary Wolf asked that I respond on his behalf.

The Department has no greater responsibility than ensuring the safety and security of our country. Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic requires everyone to work within rapidly changing, complex circumstances that create a variety of situations and conditions unique to individuals and communities.

We recognize that there are immigration-related challenges that individuals, employers, and others face as a direct result of the global pandemic. We carefully analyze these issues and leverage our resources to effectively address these challenges within our existing authorities. DHS continues to act to protect the American people and our communities and is considering a number of policies and procedures to improve the employment opportunities of U.S. workers during this pandemic.

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) continues to accept and process petitions and applications for immigration benefits. Most USCIS field offices have resumed in-person services to perform mission-essential duties and provide emergency services, with appropriate precautions to protect the workforce and the public.

In response to COVID-19, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has emphasized the importance of continued school and nonimmigrant student reporting and recordkeeping compliance while providing flexibility in meeting such requirements. The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) has published guidance for stakeholders clarifying situations in which F and M students may continue to maintain status in light of a school’s operational status due to COVID-19. The program continues to actively monitor stakeholder needs and update its publicly available guidance and resources to help ensure the health and well-being of all parties involved. Stakeholders can access SEVP’s guidance for nonimmigrant students and certified schools as well as responses to frequently asked stakeholder questions at ice.gov/coronavirus, under the “Nonimmigrant Students and SEVP-Certified Schools” tab. DHS continues to monitor events related to COVID-19 and evaluate appropriate
measures and actions to implement. Any new guidance for nonimmigrant students and related stakeholders will be updated on the referenced website. We will continue to provide guidance, resources, and information to the public on the actions and policies we are implementing through these uncertain times.

Thank you again for your letter and interest in this issue. We will consider the recommendations you have put forward.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

John H. Hill
Assistant Secretary
Office of Partnership and Engagement