

Meeting Road Map Talking Points

Steps to a Successful Meeting on Capitol Hill

1. Opening

- a. Personal introductions; exchange business cards
- b. Explain NAFSA
 - 1) I am an international educator and I am here today with NAFSA. NAFSA: Association of International Educators is the world's largest nonprofit professional association dedicated to international education, with more than 10,000 members across the country and around the world.
 - 2) Most of our members work within U.S. higher education welcoming international students and scholars or helping U.S. students and faculty go abroad.
 - 3) Together we advocate for policies that lead to a more globally informed, welcoming, and engaged United States.
- c. Make personal connection with the staffer. Possible questions:
 - 1) Did you study abroad?
 - 2) Where are you from? (Do they have connections to your state or district?)
- d. If applicable, reference impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) on your campus/community, and precautions/preparations your institution is taking, but note for them that the focus of the meeting will be on discussing the needs of international students in the U.S. and the importance of expanding/diversifying study abroad.

2. Issue #1: International Students - Talking points

- a. Losing Talent:
 - 1) We are concerned about the continuing decline in international student enrollment in the United States.
 - 2) Latest data outlined in NAFSA's *Losing Talent* report shows that new international student enrollment has decreased nearly 11% since fall 2016.
 - 3) International students, scholars, and their families bring significant academic, cultural, and economic benefits to the United States.
 - 4) **Economic data:** International students contributed nearly \$41 billion to our economy in 2018-19 academic year; international education is the fifth-largest U.S. services export. NAFSA does an annual analysis of the economic contributions of international students:
SENATE: International students contribute \$_____ and _____ jobs to our **state**.
HOUSE: International students contribute \$_____ and _____ jobs to our **district**.
 - 5) Other countries, like China, Australia, and Canada, have proactive immigration policies and marketing strategies to attract international students and scholars. While we face a decline, these countries are experiencing double-digit growth in international students.
 - 6) We need government policies that help to attract and retain international talent (turn to last page of *Losing Talent* report):
 - a. Establish a coordinated U.S. recruitment strategy.
 - b. Allow international students to express interest in remaining in the United States after graduation.
 - c. Create a direct path to green card for international students.

- d. Ensure national security by protecting sensitive research, not targeting specific nationalities.
 - e. Preserve Duration of Status policy.
 - f. Protect Optional Practical Training program.
- b. **FOR HOUSE OFFICES ONLY:** There are severe application backlogs at U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).
- 1) USCIS backlogs harm international students, scholars, and their families; delays receipt of green card, employment authorization, change of status applications.
 - 2) Need to bring transparency and accountability to application processing.

3. Issue #1: Personal stories to support your issue

- a. Let me tell you about an international student or scholar who...
 - 1) started a business and/or created U.S. jobs
 - 2) brings academic and cultural value to our institution
 - 3) advances research
 - 4) improves our local community
- b. I've heard student reactions to anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies and...
- c. Share examples of students/scholars negatively impacted by current policies: lengthy visa processing or denials, denied at the border, missed OPT due to long USCIS processing times.
- d. Share examples of students/scholars impacted by COVID-19 situation, if appropriate.

4. Issue #1: Making the asks

Welcoming international students and scholars should continue to be part of a long-term U.S. immigration and foreign policy strategy:

- a. **HOUSE & SENATE OFFICES:** Ask if the senator or representative **will support policies** that remove barriers to international students and scholars studying, working, and living in the United States, like creating a direct path to green card for international students.
- b. **HOUSE OFFICES:** Ask to **cosponsor H.R. 5971**, the Case Backlog and Transparency Act of 2020.
- c. **SENATE OFFICES:** Ask them specifically to help **preserve duration of status policy and protect practical training programs** for international students. If your senator is **republican**, ask directly if they would be willing to reach out to the administration to advocate to protect duration of status and practical training.

5. Issue #2: Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Program Act (Simon bill)

- a. Talking points
 - 1) Did you know that less than 2% of college students study abroad each year and only 10% of students study abroad before they graduate?
 - 2) Study abroad provides students the global skills, knowledge, and experiences necessary to compete in today's workforce.
 - 3) Students who study abroad are more likely to have a higher GPA and to complete their degree than students who do not.
 - 4) The Simon Program has three key goals:
 - a. boosting study abroad participation,
 - b. expanding diversity of participants, and
 - c. increasing diversity of destinations.

6. Issue #2: Personal stories to support your issue

- a. The barriers my students currently face are...
- b. Having the opportunity to apply for a federal study abroad grant would allow our institution/students to...
- c. Study abroad helps my students thrive in their studies and careers...
- d. Let me tell you the success story of one student who studied abroad from our institution. More students should have this opportunity...
- e. Let me tell you about how COVID-19 is impacting study abroad on my campus.

7. Issue #2: Making the ask [BOTH HOUSE & SENATE OFFICES]

- a. **For Simon bill original cosponsors and cosponsors:** Thank the senators/representatives for their support. Ask how you can work together to move the bill forward.
- b. **All other senators and representatives:** Ask them to cosponsor it.

8. Thank you and follow up!

- a. Thank the staffers for their time at the end of your meeting.
- b. Send a thank you email to the staffers (see sample email in the app) by 3/20.
- c. Complete the online event evaluation and congressional meeting feedback form.
- d. Brainstorm ideas on how to keep in touch with staffers year-round:
 - 1) Follow up on your asks.
 - 2) Share relevant news articles.
 - 3) Invite them to your institution (check with your federal relations officer first; see www.connectingourworld.org/toolkits for more tips).
 - 4) Schedule a local in-district visit (see www.connectingourworld.org/toolkits for tips).

If asked for more detail...

RE: Possible Duration of Status (D/S) policy change to a date certain for F and Js

- On DHS' Agenda this year
- Current policy is good; for decades, duration of status policy has allowed students the flexibility they need to finish their studies.
- Students, scholars are already tracked in SEVIS
- Changing policy would increase application backlogs and delays at USCIS

RE: Possible changes to Optional Practical Training for F-1 students

- On DHS' Agenda this year
- Critical to preserve this program
- Experiential learning is a key component of U.S. higher education
- International students seek practical training as part of higher education degree; changes to program could harm recruitment
- Competitor countries like Canada and Australia offer similar programs that attract students

RE: National Security and International Students, Scholars

- We appreciate the concerns regarding national security. We are very concerned that labeling all international students and scholars or certain nationalities as a threat will ultimately harm the United States and set us back in research and innovation.

continued...

RE: COVID-19 (*note: updates will be made to this document as necessary and shared to the app as developments continue to unfold*).

- As international educators, we remain deeply committed to the health and well-being of students and scholars around the world. Higher education leaders have an important role in ensuring the safety of all students. We are monitoring health statements from the CDC, the World Health Organization, and local health departments.
- Many U.S. colleges and universities have been following the CDC's "Guidance for Institutions of Higher Education with Students Participating in International Travel or Study Abroad Programs" and are considering cancelling or postponing study abroad travel. They are also evaluating any accommodations that may be needed for international students coming from the countries most impacted by the virus.
- Government relations staff at NAFSA has been in contact with the CDC, urging them to clarify elements of their guidance to ensure it appropriately supports students, higher education institutions, and international educators across the country.
- We appreciate that the CDC's recent guidance included a note that planning should also protect students and staff from stigma and discrimination. This virus should not be used as an excuse for racism and xenophobia.
- As with previous international health emergencies, we have no doubt that international engagement and collaboration among the world's scientists and researchers will lead the way forward.
- NAFSA will continue to follow this situation and to provide updates and resources at www.nafsa.org/coronavirus provide updates and resources at www.nafsa.org/coronavirus.