March 4, 2004

The Honorable Sherwood Boehlert
Chairman
Committee on Science
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC  20515

The Honorable Bart Gordon
Ranking Member
Committee on Science
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC  20515

Dear Chairman Boehlert and Ranking Member Gordon:

In our letter to you dated February 25, we mentioned that last month several higher education organizations had jointly surveyed U.S. colleges and universities to determine whether there had been a drop in the number of applications from international students for the fall of 2004 compared to the fall of 2003. We would like to share the results from that survey with you and request that you consider entering them into the record of the Committee’s hearing held last week on science-related visa issues.

This survey received responses from more than 530 institutions and was conducted jointly by the American Council on Education (ACE), the Association of American Universities (AAU), the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS), NAFSA: Association of International Educators, and the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC). While the application rate obviously can be affected by a number of factors, it appears that declines in international graduate student applications are particularly acute at the nation’s doctoral and research institutions, including the 25 research institutions that enroll the most international students. Many of our campuses believe that an increasing number of internationally mobile students at the highest levels – those seeking advanced study and research in the sciences, medicine, technology, business, and other fields – are looking for academic opportunities outside the United States. The survey results also indicate that the problem is especially serious for Chinese applicants to U.S. graduate programs.

We appreciate your continued attention to visa issues affecting international students and scholars choosing the U.S. as their destination of choice. Your leadership is important, and we look forward to working with you further to advance our nation’s scientific, educational, economic and security interests with respect to visa-related matters.

Sincerely,

Nils Hasselmo
President, AAU

On behalf of:
American Council on Education
Association of American Universities
Council of Graduate Schools
NAFSA: Association of International Educators
National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges

Enclosure