

TESTIMONY

of

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President
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Hearing

before the

UNITED STATES SENATE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

in regard to

**“Addressing the New Reality of the Current Visa Policy
on International Students and Researchers”**

October 6, 2004

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee:

I am honored to participate in this important hearing that is focused on a matter of vital significance for U.S. higher education and for the strategic interests of our country.

Mr. Chairman, our higher education leaders throughout Indiana particularly appreciate the contributions you have made to U.S. foreign policy and to advancing knowledge through the exchange of international students and scholars. Your insights and sensitivity to international issues have brought great distinction to the state and nation.

My testimony this morning will address current visa policies affecting international students and researchers. I will do so through the lens of Indiana University and our experiences on eight campuses in coping with and responding to the challenges of the post-9/11 world. Our experiences mirror those of most large research institutions that share our national responsibility for international education.

Indiana University: Responding to a Changing World

Indiana University has a long history of responding to fundamental challenges caused by major world changes. One of my predecessors, Herman B Wells, IU president from 1938 to 1962 and university chancellor until 2000, foresaw the post-World War II leadership role that the United States had to assume. He also anticipated its implications for U.S. higher education and laid the foundations for what Indiana University is today. The essence of so much of his thinking still resonates with us. In 1958, he wrote: "We must maintain a concern for the development and needs of the world beyond our borders...great universities such as Indiana University offer the most promising possibility for putting this concern into action."

His abiding commitment to the free flow and exchange of ideas and people of all nations, his realization that international students and scholars were essential to a vibrant diversity on campus, his insistence on nurturing lively debate on controversial issues of the day—all are as relevant today as they were almost fifty years ago. Our university remains a place where students from even the smallest towns of Indiana can discover the wider world, meet people of different histories, ethnic backgrounds, religious beliefs, and cultural norms, and learn about the responsibilities of global engagement.

Indiana University: An Institution with Unique International Strengths

As early as the 1940s, Indiana University began building an infrastructure capable of addressing the nation's needs in international expertise and foreign languages. At the start of the Cold War, IU established a special training program to teach the U.S. Army such languages as Russian and Finnish. At the end of World War II, we recruited promising European scholars to come to IU. In 1958, we took the courageous step to establish the Russian and East European Institute amidst widespread fears of communism.

The vision of IU being a global institution continued to be realized throughout subsequent decades of expansion. It has been reflected in the number of international research centers and language departments established, the range of overseas study opportunities provided and the abundance of international majors, minors, certificates, and concentrations made available throughout the IU curriculum.

IU currently has 14 international and area studies centers, some of which have received continuous funding from Title VI of the Higher Education Act since its inception. Collectively, they offer hundreds of international studies courses in nearly every humanities and social science discipline and in the professional schools.

Out of a potential inventory of some 80 foreign languages, IU offers almost 50 each year on a regular basis, many at advanced levels. Included are less commonly taught languages spoken in regions of strategic importance to the United States. Among these languages are Azeri, Haitian Creole, Hindi, Georgian, Hausa, Mongolian, Persian, Romanian, Tibetan and Uzbek.

IU has long been a national leader in providing quality study abroad opportunities for its students in almost every discipline and school (tropical biology in Costa Rica, art and archaeology in Greece, business and economics in the Netherlands, language and culture in Germany).

IU's Department of Central Eurasian Studies, established more than 40 years ago, is unique in the nation in having a doctoral degree program. Just one year after 9/11, IU's reputation in Central Asian expertise enabled it to respond to a changed world by establishing a center to teach languages spoken in countries such as Afghanistan and Kazakhstan. This center also is supported by Title VI funds.

IU has amassed international holdings in libraries, archives and museums that are among the strongest collections nationally. These collections have been enhanced by numerous Indiana University Press publications—700 titles currently in print. These publications attest to IU's contributions to world knowledge in such areas as Africa, Russia and Eastern Europe, Asia and Latin America. They focus on such disciplines as history, economics, politics, folklore and art history.

Further reflective of our global reach, we are particularly proud that IU has negotiated almost 400 formal affiliations and exchanges with universities, research institutes and organizations from around the world.

Finally, recent institution-building grants won through IU's Center for International Education and Development Assistance have established IU as a key presence in a number of countries, including Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Macedonia and Namibia, among others.

All of these opportunities encourage IU students to participate in some form of international experience or activity while at the university.

The Contribution of International Students

Indiana University could not have attained its position as a leading institution in international education without the presence and continual influx of students from around the world. Their presence enhances the diversity of the student population. They add vibrant intellectual and cultural dimensions to the life of the campus and community. Every day, interactions take place between American students and international students from some 130 countries. These students find themselves working together on classroom projects, living together in our residence halls, studying together in our libraries, enjoying campus life in student gatherings, or attending the numerous intercultural and social events on campus. They form friendships that are natural bridges for crossing the cultural divides that too often separate people and nations. These formative friendships often last far beyond the university setting and may lead to relationships that will be of long-term benefit to the United States.

International students at IU bring hard-earned knowledge and skills to our classrooms, laboratories and research programs by assisting in the instruction of many

basic courses. Our science departments would be seriously understaffed without them. Where so much of scientific research is accomplished through teamwork and worldwide collaboration, these students have proven to be valuable assets. In language and culture classes, they provide an authenticity and first-hand credibility that cannot be replicated.

It has been frequently noted that international students who obtain their education in the United States or Europe return home to become leaders in government, business, the media and academia, where they may have opportunities to influence national policies. Among IU international alumni who have achieved national stature at home are Florida Romero, former supreme court justice of the Philippines; Amara Raksasataya, dean and rector of the National Institute of Administration in Thailand; and Tamara Beruchashvili, former minister for trade and economic development of Georgia and current liaison to the European Union.

The Contribution of International Faculty and Visiting Scholars

IU's international faculty and visiting scholars make valuable contributions to the excellence and scope of the university's research mission. The synergy of shared intellectual activity forms the basis for many scientific, business and cultural collaborations and partnerships. These interactions also may lead to the development of new study abroad programs or other types of exchanges between IU and foreign institutions.

At IU, several projects owe their success to collaborations fostered by affiliations, exchanges and external development grants and contracts. With federal funding, the School of Public and Environmental Affairs brought the first-ever delegation of parliamentarians from Ukraine to the U.S. on a study visit. That visit became the basis of a multi-year exchange project to help the Ukraine write its constitution and build a more democratic and representative legislature. The Parliamentary Development Project, now in its twelfth year, has produced a steady flow of exchanges between professors and parliamentarians. It also has enabled Ukrainian students obtain four masters and three doctoral degrees from IU.

For the past decade, IU's School of Medicine has provided training and staffing for primary health care in Kenya through rotations of IU and Kenyan doctors from Moi

University Training and Referral Hospital. The program recently received a multi-million dollar federal grant to develop HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention programs in Western Kenya.

IU's Center for the Study of Languages from the Central Asian Region was able to attract qualified language developers from four Central Asian nations because of the extensive network of contacts that had been developed by faculty who are experts in that region. These networks also enabled junior faculty and researchers from the region to apply for U.S. faculty development fellowships to study at IU Bloomington for short periods.

In other areas within the university, countless international visitors are invited each year to present papers at international conferences held at IU. They participate in lecture series or perform at cultural events. The long list of such visitors has included former heads of states, ambassadors and Nobel laureates.

Universities thrive on the presence of international students and scholars who embody their diverse cultures and are their countries' unsung cultural ambassadors. When they leave the United States, that role is often reversed. They take back a piece of the "American way of life," and many become strong supporters of U.S. policy who are able to explain American positions and opinions. These individuals are a significant foreign policy asset for our nation. They represent valuable human capital to draw on in pursuit of the larger goal of promoting international understanding and world peace.

New Challenges for International Students and Scholars

In the aftermath of 9/11, U.S. colleges and universities have been called upon to make major changes in the reporting and documentation of international students and scholars. IU has responded to this challenge. We have worked cooperatively with the federal government in implementing the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). To do so, we have allocated new resources, shifted existing resources and reorganized the duties and responsibilities of staff.

SEVIS represents a major shift from a paper-based system of tracking international students and visiting scholars to automated computer tracking. We recognize and appreciate the need for an electronic solution. While improvements and

enhancements are still needed, we believe that SEVIS supports the flow of legitimate students and scholars by helping to identify those seeking to enter the U.S. under false pretenses.

We are concerned, however, that the federal government's understandable efforts to strengthen security initiatives through new visa policies and procedures have had unintended consequences. Most significantly, obtaining a visa has become a roadblock to U.S. higher education. Despite recent U.S. State Department efforts to alleviate this problem, we continue to hear from students and scholars that the process is bottlenecked and difficult to navigate. As a result, these problems are discouraging, and they are preventing significant numbers of international students and scholars from studying and working in the United States.

The Effect on International Student Enrollments

It might be useful at this point to provide the committee a general overview of the current situation on a national level. A total of 586,323 international students were studying in the U.S. in 2002-03, representing 4.6% of the total U.S. college and university student population. This total represented an increase of just 0.6% over 2001-02 numbers, the smallest annual increase since the mid-1990s.

Unfortunately, 2002-03 brought to an end a previous two-year trend of strong growth (6.4% in 2000-01 and 6.4% again in 2001-02). While national figures for 2003-04 and 2004-05 are not yet available, indications are that we will see even more dramatic declines. According to a recent survey conducted by the Council of Graduate Schools, there was a 28% decline in international graduate applications and an 18% decline in international graduate admits nationwide for fall 2004.

By comparison, other countries have recognized the value of these students and have begun to recruit them aggressively. In many cases, U.S. restrictive visa policies are used as a marketing tool to promote study in destinations other than the U.S. The number of foreign students studying in Australia has risen twelve-fold in two decades; Canada has more than tripled the number of foreign students that it had 20 years ago. For Australia, those increases now mean that 14% of its college student population is foreign. For the United Kingdom, about 12% is foreign. For the U.S., it is closer to 4%. The U.S.

may have the largest number of students, but compared to other English-speaking countries, we have the smallest percentage of international students.

At Indiana University Bloomington, our experiences are similar to these national trends. We have seen a significant decline in the number of applications from international students at both the undergraduate and graduate levels for our fall 2004 semester. International applications for admission dropped by 14% at the undergraduate level and by 21% at the graduate level.

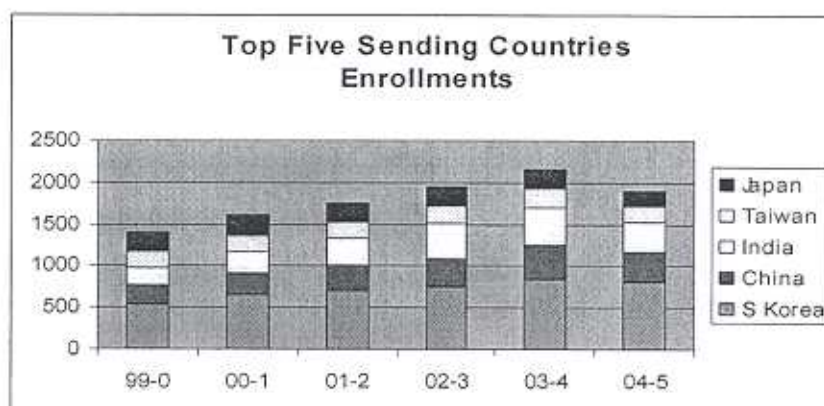
The diversity of our entering international freshman class also declined this year. In 2003, we enrolled new undergraduate students from 40 different countries; this fall, that number was reduced to 33. During the past five years, enrollment from Muslim and Middle Eastern countries has declined 22%. For fall 2004 those enrollments declined by 13.2% over the previous year.

Table 1: Enrollment from Muslim and Middle Eastern Countries

IU Bloomington	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05
Indonesia	178	187	192	195	191	126
Kuwait	3	5	5	9	9	15
Pakistan	42	47	48	40	43	31
Saudi Arabia	27	28	26	21	17	11
United Arab Emirates	65	59	17	20	14	17

Enrollments from the five leading countries of origin at the university – South Korea, China, India, Taiwan, and Japan – have declined by 11.6% for fall 2004 over the previous year. The numbers of students from China fell from 405 in fall 2003 to 357 in fall 2004. Student enrollments from India dropped from 459 to 353 in that same period. The overall picture indicates that the diversity of the student body has changed, and we are no longer hearing all of the relevant voices from outside the United States.

Table 2: Fall 2004 Decline (11.6%) at IUB in Top Country Enrollments



Mr. Chairman, the numbers are clear. It is now apparent that thousands of students who would have otherwise come to the U.S. are no longer doing so. The potential future impact on Indiana University is significant, affecting intellectual strengths, the university's research capacity and the size and quality of our student body. The economic prosperity of the state of Indiana is also affected. International students contribute \$326 million to our state economy each year.

The Potential Harm to Research and Teaching

These trends will have negative consequences for the university as a whole. A number of our international area centers, departments, research programs and professional schools depend on the continued presence of international students and scholars. For example, on the Indianapolis campus, over 30% of instructors, research specialists and technical staff in IU's School of Medicine, the second largest in the U.S., are from abroad. The school's research programs will be seriously curtailed if they are unable to continue attracting international scientists. These are serious problems facing not only Indiana University but U.S. higher education as a whole.

This is exemplified by a statement from the vice chairman for research in the Department of Radiology, who says that, "The availability of foreign visitors is absolutely critical to our programs. [They] not only benefit the department but also provide benefit to groups throughout the state of Indiana that utilize the Indiana Center of Excellence in Biomedical Imaging." The current bottleneck in visa processing will have adverse effects on the school's ability to deliver critically needed medical expertise.

On the Indianapolis campus, a critically important research project within the Department of Pharmacology was delayed for eight months and its funding put in jeopardy because a research assistant from China was stranded there awaiting visa renewal after a brief trip home.

On the Bloomington campus, the case of a visiting Iranian professor of mathematics is also instructive. In May of 2004, the professor left Indiana University to give a series of lectures in London. He has been stranded there without support while his application for a visa to return the U.S. has been under review since then. His courses have had to be covered by other faculty, putting unforeseen burdens on his department.

The Need for Sensible Visa Policies

We believe a critical need exists to re-examine current visa policies. A number of higher education organizations have made constructive recommendations for improving the visa process. We concur with these recommendations.

- At Indiana University, we are especially concerned that our students still face bottlenecks at consular offices around the world.
- It is also evident that the 90-second visa interview contributes to these delays. We wonder whether these are really necessary for the vast majority of legitimate applicants.
- Students who have successfully received entry visas should not require the same degree of scrutiny whenever they need to leave and re-enter the country.
- Providing additional resources for consular officials would certainly help and we would support such a move.

These suggestions are further described in statements and recommendations offered by NAFSA: Association of International Educators in, "Promoting Secure Borders and Open Doors: A National Interest-Based Visa Policy for Students and Scholars," and a similar document offered by the Association of American Universities, the American Association for the Advancement of Science and others, entitled, "Statement and Recommendations on Visa Problems Harming America's Scientific, Economic, and

Security Interests.” Each of these documents has been included for the record to accompany my written testimony.

Indiana University’s Efforts to Attract and Retain International Students and Scholars

Indiana University is responding to the decline in the number of international students and scholars by:

- Enhancing the information and resources available to students via the worldwide Web;
- Engaging our alumni and friends overseas to assist us more directly with recruitment;
- Giving more extensive guidance to prospective students and scholars on the visa process;
- Allocating significant resources to help them navigate that process; and
- Providing financial incentives to attract students by maximizing the use of limited scholarship funds.

Conclusion

Mr. Chairman, the outstanding programs we have worked to build at Indiana University—many of which further national strategic interests—are at risk. What is happening at Indiana University is happening at colleges and universities throughout the United States. Too many intellectual ties that cross borders and unite peoples are being severed. Stemming the flow of international students and scholars who want to participate in our academic life also stems the free flow of knowledge and ideas. This is a moment for decisive action. We must return the United States to its pre-eminence in international education.