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October 14, 2021

Jeffrey Zients, Assistant to the President
Coordinator of the COVID-19 Response
Office of the Chief of Staff
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Rochelle Walensky
Office of the Director
Center for Disease Control and Prevention
Room 5127
1600 Clifton Road NE
Atlanta, GA 30333

Dear Mr. Zients and Director Walensky:

On behalf of the undersigned higher education associations, we write to thank you for the flexibility that has been extended to our international students and scholars during the COVID-19 pandemic. Today, we would like to request that the administration continue to grant flexibility as the U.S. travel policies change, and allow international students, scholars, and researchers from countries where the vaccine is not widely available or where U.S. and World Health Organization (WHO)-approved vaccines are not widely available, the ability to enter and be vaccinated in the United States upon arrival.

As you know, international students and scholars on F-1 and J-1 visas traveling from a country under the current travel restrictions are eligible to receive a National Interest Exemption, which has allowed our students and scholars to travel to the United States for the start of the fall semester. The administration recently announced that the current travel restrictions will be lifted and replaced with a new travel and entry policy in November. That policy is expected to allow travelers who can demonstrate that they have been fully vaccinated to enter the United States. While we applaud the new policy for allowing more flexibility for international travelers and support the efforts to require vaccinations, we remain concerned that such a broad policy will impact some international students and scholars traveling from countries where vaccines are not widely available.

Many of our campuses have been on the front line of ensuring vaccine availability for our communities and encouraging students to receive the COVID vaccination, and many institutions have mandated the vaccine for students attending in-person classes. We urge you to ensure that this new policy will allow flexibility for our international students and scholars traveling from countries where U.S. and WHO-approved vaccines are not widely available, and who will receive the vaccine in the U.S., either on campus or in the surrounding community.

We respectfully ask that you work with the higher education community as you develop this new policy, to ensure that international students and scholars from countries with limited access to U.S. and WHO-approved vaccines are not limited in their ability to travel to the U.S. for their studies and research, and are allowed to receive the vaccination upon their arrival in the U.S. We look forward to working with the administration on this important issue.

Sincerely,



Ted Mitchell
President

Cc: Amy Nice, Assistant Director for International S&T Workforce, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy
David Plack, Senior Policy Advisor, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, U.S. Department of State
Traci Silas, Acting Executive Director, Office of Academic Engagement, U.S. Department of Homeland Security

On behalf of:

ACPA-College Student Educators International
Alliance for International Exchange
American Association of Colleges of Nursing
American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers
American Association of Community Colleges
American Association of State Colleges and Universities
American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges
American College Health Association
American Council on Education
American Dental Education Association
APPA, "Leadership in Educational Facilities"
Association of American Colleges and Universities
Association of American Medical Colleges
Association of American Universities
Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities
Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges
Association of International Education Administrators
Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
Association of Research Libraries
Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities (CUMU)
College and University Professional Association for Human Resources
Council for Christian Colleges & Universities
Council of Graduate Schools
Council on Governmental Relations
EDUCAUSE
ETS
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities

NAFSA: Association of International Educators
NASPA - Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education
National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO)
National Association of Colleges and Employers
National Association of College and University Business Officers
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
National Collegiate Athletic Association
Physician Assistant Education Association
Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration
State Higher Education Executive Officers Association