

Chris Liddell
Assistant to the President and Deputy Chief of Staff, Policy Coordination
Office of the Chief of Staff
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington D.C. 20500

May 19, 2020

Dear Mr. Liddell,

Thank you again for convening a roundtable with leaders of the higher education community, technology and business communities on March 8th of last spring on F-1 and M-1 international students and specialty occupations. We greatly appreciated the opportunity to share ideas on how to enable talented international undergraduate and graduate students who complete a degree at a U.S. institution to stay in the country for a period of time to work and contribute to our economy.

As America pivots to reopening its economy, and the administration rightly works to address unemployment for U.S. citizens, we request another opportunity to speak with you regarding the contributions of international students attending U.S. colleges and universities to our economy and domestic businesses.

We are deeply grateful for the White House's interest in preserving the vitality and competitiveness of the American economy during this challenging time. Part of the global leadership of U.S. higher education has involved attracting the best and the brightest students from around the world to our colleges and universities. One reason for this is the Optional Practical Training (OPT) program, which offers talented international students who complete a U.S. degree the opportunity to remain in the country for a period of time to enhance their educational experience.

We understand that the administration is reviewing the OPT program as it examines additional actions following the April 22 executive order, "Proclamation Suspending Entry of Immigrants who Present Risk to the U.S. Labor Market during the Economic Recovery Following the COVID-19 Outbreak." Section 6 instructs the Secretary of Labor and the Secretary of Homeland Security, in consultation with the Secretary of State, to review non-immigrant programs and recommend other measures to stimulate the economy and prioritize the hiring and employment of U.S. workers. We sent a letter to those agencies to offer to act as a resource as the administration reviews these programs and they respond to the executive order¹.

We would welcome the opportunity to continue the discussion with you and others in the administration about the importance of international students and their positive impact on the U.S. economy.

¹ <https://www.acenet.edu/Documents/Letter-State-DHS-Labor-Immigration-EO-043020.pdf>

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ted Mitchell". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Ted Mitchell
President

On behalf of:

American Association of Community Colleges
American Association of State Colleges and Universities
American Council on Education
Association of American Universities
Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities
Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
Council for Christian Colleges and Universities
NAFSA: Association of International Educators
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities