A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO SUPPORT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN THE U.S. AMID COVID-19 & ANTI-IMMIGRATION POLICIES
DEAR ALLIES,

This guide was developed by APA Division 17 International Section (ICP) in response to the recent COVID-19 and anti-immigration policies. Please use this guide to continue advocating and supporting international students during this difficult time!

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WHY SUPPORT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS & SCHOLARS?

- International students and scholars improve economy, enrich classrooms, and become great foreign policy assets.
- The US economy has lost $11.8 billion and more than 65,000 jobs due to the continued decline in international student enrollment since 2016.
- It's time for you to support international students and scholars from xenophobia during this pandemic!
TAKE ACTION, BECOME ALLIES

Check-in.
Avoid asking, “How are you?”
Instead, ask “How can I support you right now?”
or “Have you been able to find time for rest?”

Communicate.
Urge Congress to Support International Students & Scholars and Protect OPT
Submit your information (click here) and send a sample message to your lawmakers to support the international community.
Share.
Share this guide with your peers and colleagues and start a conversation. Take the advocacy steps below.

Impact.
Ask members of Congress to make floor statements in support of International Students. Get a sample request letter from here and email to your Member of Congress (to find your representative, click here).

Educate.
Email and tweet at your Senators and Representative about the dollars, jobs, academic and cultural benefits international students bring to your state.
Learn.

- Read the recent U.S. visa and entry restrictions related to COVID-19 congregated & summarized by NAFSA.
- Realize that both the work visa suspension (i.e., H-1B) and the rescinded restrictions on international students have negatively affected the international community.

Stay informed.

Check the latest information on COVID-19 Travel Restrictions by Country, the recent APA webinar & Learn how COVID-19 affects visa status, OPT, H-1B visa, etc.
Advise.
Despite the delays in the U.S. Visa process, advise incoming international students **NOT TO ENTER THE U.S. WITH A TRAVEL VISA**. Doing so may cause serious issues with the legality of their visa status.

Encourage.
Encourage grad students & postdocs to stay on track with their program requirements with the resources below:

- APA COVID-19 Information & Resources | APA COVID-19
- APA Webinars - Staying on Track During a Pandemic | APA Stay-on-Track
- National Postdoctoral Association | National PostDoc.org - Check out their resources including International Postdoctoral Survival Guide
Check in.
Check in with your students or peers about whether/how their GAship may be impacted if they cannot enter the U.S.

Explore Resources.
Be proactive in identifying and/or creating financial aids or scholarships for international students because these tend to be limited.
Be Aware.

- International students are **not eligible for** the CARES Act Funds, Stimulus Check, Work-Study positions, and other federal funded scholarships (e.g., APA Minority Fellowship).
- Similarly, international scholars (i.e., faculty/staff/employees) are **not eligible for** unemployment benefits and the CARES Act Funds.
- Some international students (e.g., graduate students) **cannot earn their tuition waivers or stipends** because they cannot travel to the U.S.
IF YOU'D LIKE TO CHECK THE GOOGLE DOCS OF THE GUIDES...

Please visit

- **Guide for Allies:**
  https://go.umd.edu/SupportIS

- **Guide for International Students:**
  https://go.umd.edu/ICPSupport
UNDERSTAND VISA KEYWORDS TO HELP INT’L STUDENTS & SCHOLARS
International students and scholars juggle with numerous documents just to maintain their status and study/work in the U.S. While guiding them to the International Services Offices is a wise decision, it is also imperative that we all learn some keywords to better understand international students’ visa concerns!
F-1 Visa.
- Allows students to attend U.S. schools as a full-time student.
- Most international students in the U.S. hold this visa.
- F-1 students may work on-campus for up to 20 hours a week under certain conditions and restrictions.

M-1 Visa.
Allows students to participate in vocational or other nonacademic programs.
J-1 Visa.
J-1 Visa is for work and study related exchange programs.

CPT.
Curricular Practical Training (CPT) allows F-1 students to participate in an internship, practicum or cooperative education program. One year of full-time CPT ELIMINATES a student’s eligibility for OPT.
Optional Practical Training (OPT) provides F-1 students with an opportunity for hands-on work experience related to the academic field of study.

If students’ degrees are considered as qualifying STEM degrees (or if students’ degrees have eligible CIP Codes), they can apply for the 24-month STEM OPT extension.
**VISA KEYWORDS**

**H-1B Visa.**
A “Work Visa” that allows US companies to employ graduate level workers in specialty occupations.

**H-1B Cap Gap Extension.**
It allows certain students with pending or approved H-1B petitions to remain in the U.S. in F-1 status until the start date of their approved H-1B employment period, even if the OPT authorization and/or F-1 grace period would have otherwise expired before October 1.
Severe Economic Hardship

If international students are suffering a severe economic hardship due to unforeseen changes, they may apply to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for authorization to work off-campus.

Check in with international student and scholar services on campus and see if they have emergency funds specifically for international students.