



The Honorable Antony Blinken
U.S. Department of State
Office of the Secretary
Room 7226
Harry S. Truman Building
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

CC: The Honorable Brian McKeon, Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Budget
Ian Brownlee, Acting Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs
Matt Lussenhop, Acting Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs

April 13, 2021

Dear Secretary Blinken,

Congratulations on your post and to the Biden administration for its many successes thus far.

As presidents of Texas universities and current board and advisory council members of the Texas International Education Consortium, we represent a network of 30 Texas and global universities devoted to robust international education partnerships and programs. In Texas alone, our consortium serves some 500,000 students and more than 32,000 faculty from across all six systems of higher education, plus independent public and private institutions.

We have been heartened by your words of support for U.S. public diplomacy and the power of people-to-people exchange. With this in mind, we are writing to urge your immediate action to resume visa processing at embassies and consulates around the world. Time is of the essence if our universities are to have a chance at welcoming international students this fall. We know the importance of international education to the Department of State, and we are urging your action to bring this vital sector back to life.

As vaccine production and administration are increasing, we understand a number of other destination countries of choice for international students are processing student visa applications. With U.S. visa processing all but halted for academic categories, U.S. universities will face another year of little to no international students and scholars. This is devastating for our universities. Research relies on international cooperation, U.S. students are positively benefited by global diversity on campus, our universities are greatly supported by the tuition and know-how international students contribute, and our lack of internationalization negatively impacts our global rankings.

We are aware Consular Affairs is operating under difficult circumstances and prioritizing American Citizen Services and immigrant visas. We do not object to this prioritization. We also understand posts that are able to process non-immigrant visas are prioritizing students and exchange program participants. We appreciate the recognition of the immense value of these

travelers to both the U.S. economy and our public diplomacy, but too many posts simply are not offering non-immigrant visa appointments at all. Being first in line has no value if the line goes nowhere. We urge you to direct Consular Affairs to find ways, such as through video conferencing or videotelephony tools to resume visa adjudication for all F-1 and J-1 academic categories at every embassy and consulate.

We do not make this request lightly, but universities have proven themselves effective at containing the spread of COVID-19. Moreover, the State Department Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and the Department of Homeland Security both have systems in place to exercise oversight and monitoring over sponsors of J-1 and F-1 visas.

Finally, with the lapsing of Presidential Proclamation 10052 on March 31, we hope to see students, scholars, and professors exempted from any 212f or other broad prohibitions to entry and allowed individualized determinations. To do otherwise is to severely harm one of the U.S.'s strongest attributes.

Thank you for considering this request and do not hesitate to call upon us if we can be of assistance.

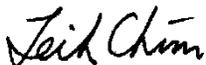
Sincerely,



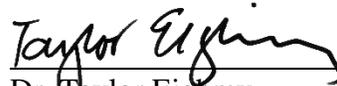
Dr. Lawrence Schovanec
Texas Tech University
Chair, TIEC Board of Directors



Dr. Pablo Arenaz
Texas A&M International University
Vice Chair, TIEC Board of Directors



Dr. Teik Lim
The University of Texas at Arlington



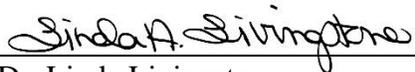
Dr. Taylor Eighmy
The University of Texas at San Antonio



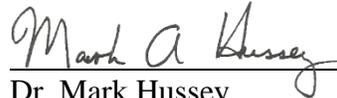
Dr. Suzanne Shipley
Midwestern State University



Dr. Richard Benson
The University of Texas at Dallas



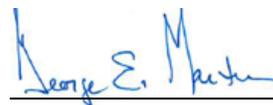
Dr. Linda Livingstone
Baylor University



Dr. Mark Hussey
Texas A&M University-Kingsville



Dr. Ken Evans
Lamar University



Dr. George Martin
St. Edward's University