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May 18, 2020

The Honorable Michael R. Pompeo  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State

The Honorable Chad F. Wolf  
Acting Secretary  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Dear Secretary Pompeo and Acting Secretary Wolf:

On behalf of the 10 campuses of the University of California (UC), which represent more than 280,000 students, 227,000 faculty, staff, and other academics, and more than 2 million living alumni, we write to express the urgent need for the issuance of clear guidance related to supporting the continued presence of international students, scholars, and researchers at institutions of higher education in the United States.

The international members of our campus communities are experiencing unprecedented levels of uncertainty as they seek to start or continue their studies and/or research in the United States in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many international residents and researchers must begin their terms in the United States by July 1, 2020 to meet the requirements of their programs. Immediate, thoughtful guidance from the departments you lead would provide much-needed clarity to both new and continuing students, scholars, faculty, medical residents and fellows, other international student applicants and institutions of higher education across the country.

International members of our university community provide unique and valuable contributions and perspectives that diversify our institutions and better position our universities to engage in work that is of national and international significance. Removing these individuals from campuses or preventing them from entering the country would serve to undermine decades of collaborative work between the United States and our international partners in fields that contribute to health and economic security for America. As draft guidance is developed, we encourage you to consider its potential impact and unintended consequences.

Specifically, we ask you to ensure that non-immigrant visas relating to study or research at institutions of higher education are not affected by future executive action, and that visa interviews continue to be scheduled and conducted remotely, well in advance of the start date of these students' programs to allow them to travel and begin their study on time.

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Furthermore, we encourage your agencies to provide timely reports to Congress with detailed plans for addressing the surge in visa applications we currently note across our campuses.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, the admission of 4,200 medical residents and fellows arriving in the United States on J-1 and H-1B visas must be coordinated in a multiagency effort to ensure they begin their programs on July 1 as scheduled. The inability of these residents and fellows to begin their training programs in July would disrupt patient care in the United States at a critical time. Additionally, we recommend that the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) temporarily amend the current rule, which automatically grants work authorization for H-1B and certain other workers with timely filed extension applications from 240 days, to an indefinite period during the pandemic.

Forthcoming guidance will provide students with essential information and help them understand the opportunities available for continuing their education and training in the United States. While DHS is currently evaluating how to address the continuation of optional practical training (OPT) and curricular practical training (CPT), we strongly encourage the extension of these programs. Ensuring that students who are currently abroad may apply for OPT in the United States is particularly important—many international students decided to return overseas as the pandemic intensified, and now seek to return to their institutions of study. We also would like to request that the unemployment limit be extended for those who were in the OPT program and suddenly lost their job due to the pandemic. Additionally, health care-related OPT and CPT programs are particularly vital for the safety and wellbeing of the country during the pandemic, and we ask that any final guidance make work authorization applications for recent graduates in these fields a high priority.

We would be remiss if we did not note the May 7, 2020 letter sent to President Trump by Senators Cotton, Cruz, Grassley and Hawley, encouraging suspension of employment-based immigration into the United States while national unemployment remains high. We respectfully wish to convey our concern with their proposal, which we believe would likely undermine, and perhaps disrupt, the strength of our nation's research enterprise, especially at a time when basic research is most important to the future vitality of the United States.

The cornerstone of this nation's research enterprise is found at our research universities, which benefit overwhelmingly from the work of—and our continued collaboration with—international students and scholars. They are critical to the U.S. economic engine, and in today's unique environment, we should be enhancing this part of our economy, not diminishing it. We urge the administration to carefully weigh the long-term implications of changing U.S. visa and immigration policy before doing so, especially changes that could diminish the United States' international prominence in either the educational and research enterprises, or that would impact global educational and research efforts, which are at the forefront of the effort to overcome the pandemic.

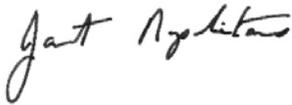
If you have questions about how this guidance would potentially affect our institutions or would like to learn more about the work we do, please contact Chris Harrington ([Chris.Harrington@ucdc.edu](mailto:Chris.Harrington@ucdc.edu), (202) 974-6314).

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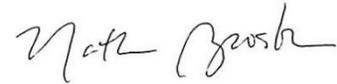
Yours very truly,



Janet Napolitano  
President



Gene Block  
Chancellor, UCLA



Nathan Brostrom  
Interim Chancellor, UC Merced



Carol T. Christ  
Chancellor, UC Berkeley



Howard Gillman  
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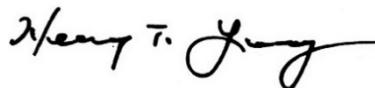
Cynthia Larive  
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cc: California Congressional Delegation  
Associate Vice President for Federal Governmental Relations Chris Harrington