



**U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement**



SEVIS

Student And Exchange Visitor Information System

Newsletter

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A Message From Susan Geary, Acting Director

Just over one year ago, we marked a major milestone for the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS), when all U.S. schools and exchange programs were required to register international students and exchange visitors into the Web-based system for tracking foreign students in the United States.

Despite early challenges in implementing this ambitious new program, we've managed to smooth out many of the bumps in the road. This progress would not have been possible without the dedicated assistance of the entire SEVIS community—schools, exchange programs, vocational programs and all the other stakeholders who have offered feedback and advice to help us streamline the program.

Our accomplishments are notable: in the first year, the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) has taken over the school certification process that currently includes more than 8,800 schools and exchange visitor programs, representing more than 9,500 campuses that have been certified to participate in the program. As of August 2004, more than 761,000 students and exchange visitors studying in the United States were registered with SEVIS. Our program officers

have participated in numerous outreach efforts to foster an open dialogue between SEVP and the SEVIS community.

As we enter our second year, we're launching a number of new initiatives—notably, the implementation of the SEVIS I-901 fee, which went into effect on September 1, and expanded outreach efforts through our Web site and this quarterly newsletter. We want to continue building upon our record of success, so that SEVIS can continue to be a valuable tool for both securing the homeland and providing service to international students and exchange visitors.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to note another recent change at SEVP headquarters: Jill Drury, who has spearheaded this effort as director of SEVP for the past year, has left to join her husband in what will be an extended overseas tour of duty. Jill's leadership was critical in meeting the challenges of SEVIS's first year, and she will be missed.

In the interim until a permanent Director is named, I have been appointed as the Acting Director of SEVP. In addition, Melissa Edmon joins SEVP as the Acting Deputy Director. Melissa brings a wealth of experience in immigration

SEVIS By The Numbers As Of August 13, 2004

Total approved schools	7,384
Total approved programs	1,426
Active students and exchange visitors	761,553
Active dependents of students and exchange visitors	117,220

Upcoming Policy Events Fall 2004 Quarter

- I-901 fee goes into effect
- Interim rule on appeals process for schools
- Interim rule on F3 and M3 nonimmigrant students (commuter students)
- Interim rule on recertification
- China/India pilot implementation
- Western Union Quick Pay Service for 901 payment option goes into effect
- Implementation of SEVIS Real-Time Validation for fee payment
- SEVIS "Customer Service" Web site

issues, having worked with both the former Immigration and Naturalization Service and the Department of Homeland Security's Office of International Affairs.

We look forward to continuing the accomplishments of our first year, so that we can enable a global population to experience the many educational and cultural opportunities that the United States has to offer. I, and the SEVP staff, look forward to working with you to achieve this goal.

Susan Geary,
Acting Director

People Are Asking . . .

Facts On SEVIS Fees And Chinese Applicants

QUESTION: Will the monetary restrictions currently imposed upon Chinese citizens affect the ability of Chinese students and exchange visitors to pay the I-901 fee?

ANSWER: This is a question often asked, and based on a prevalent misconception. Chinese citizens who are accepted into U.S. schools and programs can pay the related fees associated with these programs without violating Chinese law.

CITIC Industrial Bank (CIB) currently has 120 branches that collect the Machine Readable Visa fee in China. A Chinese citizen who is applying for a U.S. Visa pays for the visa fee in local currency. CIB accepts the local currency and then uses the funds to prepare either an international money order or to order a check drawn on a U.S. bank to satisfy the visa fee obligation. In neither case has the individual converted local funds into U.S. currency.

Pilot Fee Program Slated For China, India

Moving off the wish list and onto the drawing board, the pilot I-901 Fee programs for China and India were the subject of recent substantive discussions between the SEVP and the Department of State Consular Affairs Office. Remaining technical issues were staffed and implementation targets for early 2005 were discussed by the interagency working group.

One of the significant highlights of the pilots is their foundation on embedded State Department processes. In China, it is anticipated that students and exchange visitors will use the bank intermediary currently used to process visa fees. In India the I-901 fee will be paid at the embassies and consulates as is now done for visa applications.

Susan Geary expressed her commitment to these fee payment options in the two countries which continue to supply the majority of students and exchange visitors for American schools and exchange programs.

Need SEVIS Forms? Visit Our Web Site

Schools and programs are usually the first place that students and exchange visitors turn to for information and assistance. A PDF copy of the I-901 form with instructions has been included in our roll out materials which are available on the Web at www.ice.gov/sevis. We have also posted fact sheets and brochures that are germane to the majority of this population. In addition, the Web site includes a comprehensive list of "Frequently Asked Questions" relevant to a wide range of circumstances that might affect students. As you provide information to your future students and exchange visitors please consider including, at a minimum, a copy of the I-901 form with instructions to assist those who do not have computer access. This form is only available online, or in paper when ordered in bulk from the Eastern

Forms Center at 800-870-3676. This form will not be available at embassies or consulates.

Upcoming Refinements To SEVIS Fee Process

Other refinements to the payment system have been developed and will be implemented later this fall after the completion of a testing and evaluation protocol. They include the following:

- Western Union Quick Pay Service will give applicants the ability to pay at worldwide Western Union locations that handle the Quick Pay Service.
- SEVIS Real-Time Validation will improve the ability to match payment data received by SEVIS. SEVP will perform a real-time check between the student and exchange visitor fee data entered on the Web and SEVIS to ensure 100 percent accuracy in data submitted on the Web. A similar process will be used to check lockbox transactions to cross check the information on the check with the student I-901 fee payment form before accepting payment.
- SEVIS "Customer Service" Web site will enable students or exchange visitors to check the status of their payment on the Web. The site will provide information such as whether the payment has been received and the date the receipt was mailed.

Update: Recertifying Your School Or Program

Under current federal regulation, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is directed to review SEVP-certified schools every two years. SEVP is preparing an interim rule that will be sent to DHS for review and forwarding to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for approval.

All schools should know that regardless of how soon they will become due for recertification (i.e., two years after their initial certification), they will be given adequate time and direction to petition for recertification.

As needed, current certification expiration dates will be extended. Currently certified schools will continue to have authorization to enroll nonimmigrant F/M students until they have had full opportunity to petition for recertification, as well as while their petition for recertification is pending approval.

Technical Report: Upcoming Releases And Upgrades

SEVIS just recently implemented Release 4.12, which was primarily focused on supporting the HQ SEVP Certification Unit, on Aug. 6, 2004. There are three more major releases that are underway. Release 4.13, which is targeted for implementation in October 2004, supports the database migration from Oracle 8i to Oracle 9i. Release 4.14, which is targeted for

Contact Us

- **For I-901 fee payment help:** Visit the SEVP Web site at www.ice.gov/sevis/i901. You can also call the I-901 Customer Service hotline at **785-330-1048** (United States Country Code 011) or e-mail us at fmjfee.SEVIS@dhs.gov.
- **For questions pertaining to your specific school or exchange visitor program,** contact the person listed on your Form I-20 or DS-2019.
- **For schools and programs,** contact the following for all other technical questions: the SEVIS Help Desk at **800-892-4829** between 8 A.M. and 8 P.M. Eastern Time or by e-mail at SEVIShelpdesk@eds.com for assistance and support. For specific technical, urgent cases: Toolbox.SEVIS@dhs.gov
- **For school certification questions:** To check the status of an I-17 petition, confirm receipt of payment or to receive information on a site visit, contact the SEVP School Certification Branch at schoolcert.SEVIS@dhs.gov or **202-305-2346** or by fax at **202-353-3723**. The School Certification Branch is organized on a state-by-state basis. If a school administrator contacts the School Certification Branch, our staff will direct the call or message to the Case Analyst working with the schools in that state.

SEVIS' commitment to the continual process of improvement begins with your comments, concerns, or suggestions. Please contact SEVIS:

By email: SEVIS.Source@dhs.gov
By phone: **202-305-2346**
By fax: **202-353-3723**

By mail: **ICE/SEVIS**
800 K Street, NW, Suite 1000
Washington, D.C. 20536

December 2004, will support the recertification process.

Release 5.0 is scheduled for a 2005 release, which will be focused primarily on batch enhancements, and upgrading the batch functionality to mirror what is already in production for RTI. Further information regarding what is addressed in each release will be disseminated closer to the implementation dates.

STSC Retires: On September 30, 2004, SEVP plans to retire the Student and School Database (STSC). Further guidance will be forthcoming to the field Password Issuance Control System (PICS) Officers as well as the current users of STSC. As of August 2003, all educational institutions were mandated to input all continuing and initial foreign students and exchange visitors in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). However, for historical purposes, the STSC data will be archived and made available. In the meantime, if you have questions relating to the

retirement of STSC please contact the DHS Help Desk at 888-347-7762. Please do not contact the HQ PICS Office.

A Thank You . . .

Thank you all for your review of the SEVIS Web site and your comments. We welcome the opportunity to improve our communications with the community and will consider your suggestions.

Please continue to review the Web site for continued improvements and enhancements.