



July 13, 2020

Dear Senators Bennet and Gardner and Representatives DeGette, Neguse, Tipton, Buck, Lamborn, Crow and Perlmutter:

We write to express deep concern about the recent Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) guidance to limit the ability of international students to choose the most appropriate course modality for their needs during the pandemic. This policy deprives our institutions of the flexibility necessary to make responsible decisions about reopening safely in ways consistent with our academic missions, student bodies, and campus and local public health environments. **We urge Congress to ensure that the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of State allow any international student with a valid visa to continue their education regardless of whether a student is receiving his or her education online, in person, or through a combination of both, whether inside or outside the United States, during this unprecedented global health emergency.**

Higher education is America's 4th largest export ahead of telecommunications and agricultural exports and behind only autos, planes, and pharmaceuticals. In Colorado, more than 11,800 international students attended Colorado colleges and universities in the 2018-2019 academic year contributing \$470 million to the state's economy and supporting 6,029 jobs. But, their contribution to our state far outstrips these simple financial impacts. International students are vital, active participants in the life of our campus communities. They enrich our campuses and our local communities by bringing with them creativity, diverse viewpoints, and bold ideas. The contribution of international students to the growth, development and competitiveness of our country is immeasurable. When they return home, they carry American ideals and values to every corner of the globe. Welcoming international students to the U.S. forges relationships that pay dividends in business, diplomacy, science and culture for generations. Likewise, if Coloradans are going to be prepared to face the increasingly global world, they must have an opportunity to interact and learn from their peers from other countries.

This ICE directive puts the U.S. position as a world leader in international education at risk by imposing needless hardship on thousands of new and returning international students, causing them great uncertainty and confusion at an already difficult time. The vast majority of our international students (90 percent according to a recent national survey) remained in the United States when campuses closed in the spring rather than travel to their home countries due to health concerns, cost of travel, border restrictions, and other factors. With the fall semester fast approaching, they have relied on the claims of the government that previous student visa flexibility would continue for the duration of the pandemic. We also express concern that this DHS policy was written with no input from the higher education community or the students who might be impacted.

Each institution signed onto this letter has been working diligently to determine the best path for safe return of our students. This careful work has led to different approaches. Many of our institutions have been moving towards a hybrid model of education for the fall semester that would receive some measure of flexibility under this policy. However, even those institutions may be faced with impossible decisions under this rule should local health conditions require them to return their campuses to remote teaching and learning as they did during the spring semester. International students should not be asked to live under the threat that they may be forced out of the country at any time. The federal government must respect the right of college and university leaders to respond to the unique health conditions they are experiencing and make decisions in the best interests of their students, faculty and staff.

As always, thank you for your continued work on behalf of Colorado, our educational institutions, and our students during this difficult time. We look forward to working closely with all of your offices to resolve this issue as expediently as possible. Please let us know if there is anything we can do to help.

Sincerely,

Angie Paccione, Executive Director, *Colorado Department of Higher Education*

Tony Frank, Chancellor, *Colorado State University System*

Leah L. Bornstein, President, *Aims Community College*

Greg Salisbury, President, *Western Colorado University*

Charles G. Lief, President, *Naropa University*

Janine Davidson, President, *Metropolitan State University of Denver*

Stephanie Donner, Executive Director, *Emily Griffith Technical College*

Rev. John P. Fitzgibbons, S.J., President, *Regis University*

Paul Johnson, President, *Colorado School of Mines*

Mike Edmonds and Robert G. Moore, Acting Co-Presidents, *Colorado College*

Cheryl D. Lovell, President, *Adams State University*

Jeremy Haefner, Chancellor, *University of Denver*

Carrie Besnette Hauser, President, *Colorado Mountain College*

Tim Foster, President, *Colorado Mesa University*

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Lance Bolton, President, *Pikes Peak Community College*

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