

## **Multi-Society Statement on Prevention of Nonimmigrant Students from Taking Online-Only Coursework**

**July 8, 2020**

The changes announced on July 6, 2020 by the Student and Exchange Visitor Program of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement will have an immeasurable negative impact on many academic institutions and their students, most notable those with significant Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) programs.

In the face of the on-going COVID-19 pandemic, colleges and universities across the U.S. are struggling with whether or how to open for classes this fall, with many choosing either blended or fully online offerings. The announced change prohibits those non-immigrants pursuing academic (F-1 visa) and vocational (M-1 visa) coursework from taking a fully online course load and remaining in the U.S. It is also important to note that many STEM students working on graduate degrees have significant responsibilities outside the classroom that reflect research requirements of their programs and cannot be accomplished if the student is not physically present at their institutions. These non-classroom activities represent a critical component of their education and training.

**Given that a fully online course load may be the only option at many universities, and given the challenges in international travel including visa access, the net effect of this change would appear to be to force large numbers of non-immigrant students to disrupt their studies, leave the U.S., and be unable to return for the foreseeable future.**

A substantial proportion of STEM graduate students are foreign born, as are many undergraduates. A talented STEM workforce is needed to tackle the grand challenges of tomorrow. U.S. institutions are greatly enriched by the talent, intelligence, work ethic, and diversity of thought that international faculty and students bring to their campuses. Many of these students stay in the U.S. after graduation and contribute to the economy, sometimes starting tech-based businesses or impacting entire industries. Exclusion of non-immigrant graduate students can be expected to have a significantly negative impact on US academic STEM research. Exclusion of non-immigrant undergraduate students can be expected to have a significantly negative impact on the global awareness and cultural richness of domestic students seeking to compete in an increasingly integrated global economy. Moreover, this action—added to previous actions taken by the current federal administration—continues the creation of a negative atmosphere that impedes our ability to recruit the best global talent to STEM studies, instruction, research, and practice. **In sum, the effect of this this change will be to inflict serious long-term damage to the advancement of science and engineering and the global competitiveness of the U.S.** This is not an action we would have expected from a U.S. government, nor is it one that we can support.

While we support efforts to ensure security within our borders, we hope that these efforts will be carried out in such a way as to minimize disruption to those who teach, practice, and study STEM disciplines in the U.S.

**American Society for Engineering Education**

ABET

American Anthropological Association

American Association of Physicists in Medicine

American Ceramic Society

American Dairy Science Association

American Geophysical Union

American Institute for Medical and Biological Engineering

American Institute of Biological Sciences

American Society for Engineering Management

American Society for Investigative Pathology

American Society for Matrix Biology

American Society for Microbiology

American Society for Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition

American Society of Civil Engineers

American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene

Association for Psychological Science

Association for Women in Science

Audio Engineering Society

Biomedical Engineering Society

Biophysical Society

Council on Undergraduate Research

Entomological Society of America

The Histochemical Society

The Institute for Operations Research and the Management Sciences

Institute of Food Technologists

Institute of Mathematical Statistics

Institute of Transportation Engineers

International Society for Magnetic Resonance in Medicine

International Society for Stem Cell Research

Materials Research Society

Mathematical Association of America

The Minerals, Metals & Materials Society

North American Vascular Biology Organization

Research!America

Seismological Society of America

Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics

Society for the Study of Reproduction

Society of Asian Scientists and Engineers

Society of Women Engineers  
SPIE, the international society for optics and photonics