

# APS Stands with International Students Studying in the United States

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This summer, proposed changes to U.S. immigration policies cast widespread uncertainty among international students in the country who had planned to take online courses this fall because of the COVID-19 pandemic. After fierce opposition from the scientific and academic communities, including APS, the government's plans were quickly dropped.

On July 6, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) announced that it would end temporary exemptions to online learning requirements as part of the Student and Exchange Visitor Program. That move would have forced international students to take in-person classes at U.S. universities to remain in the country legally. APS wrote directly to ICE expressing strong opposition to the proposed change, emphasizing the ongoing threat of COVID-19 and the risk to students' physical and mental health in forcing them to attend in-person classes.

The APS letter also referenced National Science Foundation data showing that between 2000 and 2017, more than 4,100 individuals on temporary visas received their PhD in psychology in the United States, highlighting the importance of international students to the advancement of global psychological science and to closing the country's scientific talent gap. Other data show that science and engineering PhD students in the United States on temporary visas tend to stay at least 5 years after they obtain a degree,

continuing to contribute their skills to the workforce.

APS also joined with the broader scientific community in signing on to two additional letters condemning the move. Some universities, including Harvard and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, even sued the administration.

In response to the opposition, ICE dropped the planned changes to exemptions on July 14, only 8 days after they were announced—a positive outcome for advocates who organized and responded quickly to address the issue.

As the world continues to deal with the effects of COVID-19, fostering a strong scientific workforce in the United States and abroad has become more important than ever. Psychological scientists have much to contribute to our understanding of how behavior can mitigate the effects of COVID-19, and the global nature of the science will continue to be important for shaping best practices and policies moving forward.

[Click here to view the APS letter to the Student and Exchange Visitor Program of US Immigration and Customs Enforcement.](#)

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