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SEVP deploys new class of field representatives to work with US schools hosting international students

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WASHINGTON ? The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) deployed 14 additional field representatives to territories across the country this week. The field representatives serve as liaisons between the nearly 9,000 U.S. schools that enroll international students and SEVP. The program, housed within U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), certifies schools to enroll international students and protects national security by overseeing those students for compliance with U.S. laws.

The field representatives serve as a key resource for schools on the SEVP certification and recertification processes, and they educate schools on the program's rules and regulations and federal laws governing international students studying in the United States. They also protect national security by improving the data integrity of the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS), an Internet-based system that houses information on international students and exchange visitors while they are in the United States. This data is used by government agencies to ensure compliance with U.S. laws.

With the new class, SEVP now has a 28 total of field reps based in 21 states across the country. Some states, based on the number of SEVP-certified schools, have multiple field representatives.

The new field representatives will build on successes achieved by the first class ^[2] that resulted in greater compliance with government regulations. Key successes from the first class include:

- A field representative in Oregon helped a local public school district understand and comply with government reporting requirements. Four of the district's high schools incorrectly issued a government form from the school district's main office, instead of the individual schools, as required. The field representative addressed the need to have accurate and up-to-date SEVIS records, and the designated school official subsequently

transferred student records from the district office to the actual school of attendance.

- A small, private high school in Minnesota issued a required government form to their sole international student, but failed to register that student in SEVIS in the necessary timeframe. As a result, the student's SEVIS record was automatically terminated, which placed the student out of status. When the field representative visited the school, school officials said this student planned to transfer to a well-regarded U.S. university. Unfortunately, since the student was out of status she could not transfer schools. The field representative suggested the school official contact the SEVIS Help Desk to correct the error and document that the official had unintentionally failed to register the student. The situation was rectified in compliance with regulations, and the student successfully transferred to the U.S. university.
- In Georgia, the field representative assisted a private K-12 school to better understand reporting requirements. The school was not in compliance with regulations because the designated school officially failed to register the records of several of its new and returning students in SEVIS. As a result, 12 students had terminated or canceled SEVIS records, though they were actively enrolled at the school. The Atlanta-based SEVP field representative helped the designated school official navigate through the process of requesting correction of the students' records back to valid status so they would be in compliance with federal regulations governing studying in the United States. By doing so, the field representative helped maintain SEVIS data integrity.
- Field representatives help schools with student-specific issues. In Washington, a student needed to retake a course to move forward in her program, but that course was not offered until the following semester. The student inquired about the options available to her. The SEVP field representative provided regulatory guidance to assist the school's designated school official to determine the correct course of action and available options. The student ultimately enrolled in a full course of study to maintain her status and will retake the failed prerequisite course when it is offered during the next school term.

“When we hired the first class of field representatives, we wanted to foster proactive compliance amongst SEVP-certified schools,” said Lou Farrell, SEVP director. “Our first class of field representatives did just that. They helped schools navigate rules and regulations and mitigate issues. We have the same high hopes for the newest class of field representatives.”

Before deploying to their respective territories, field representatives complete an eight-week training course in Washington, D.C., where they learn about federal laws and regulations and the SEVP school certification process. In addition to classroom instruction, the field representatives spend time at U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), the U.S. Department of State and HSI's Counter Terrorism and Criminal Exploitation Unit to see how the various agencies' units work together to vet international students studying in the United States.

Field representatives manage territories in one of three regions – eastern, central and western. They work with schools in the field four days a week and spend one day per week at their home office. Once fully staffed, each region will have 20 field representatives, for a nationwide total of 60. SEVP determined the size and location of the 60 territories based on the number of SEVP-certified schools in a specific geographic area.

Once deployed, a field representative has 30 days to contact designated school officials in their territory. Field representatives must meet twice a year with each certified school in their

territory with active international students. If a school is SEVP-certified, but does not have any current international students, the field representative will reach out to that school via an annual visit, phone call or email.

SEVP monitors approximately one million international students pursuing academic or vocational studies (F and M visa holders) in the United States and their dependents. It also certifies schools and programs that enroll these students. The U.S. Department of State monitors exchange visitors (J visa holders) and their dependents, and oversees exchange visitor programs.

Both use SEVIS to protect national security by ensuring that students, visitors and schools comply with U.S. laws. SEVP also collects and shares SEVIS information with government partners, including CBP and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, so only legitimate international students and exchange visitors gain entry into the United States.

HSI reviews potential SEVIS records for potential violations and refers cases with potential national security or public safety concerns to its field offices for further investigation. Additionally, SEVP's Analysis and Operations Center reviews student and school records for administrative compliance with federal regulations related to studying in the United States.

Team Notes:

Agency:

ICE [3]

Profession/Occupation:

Students [4]

Nonimmigrant Visas:

SEVIS [5]

SEVP [6]

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[1] <https://immigration.com/news/sevp-deploys-new-class-field-representatives-work-us-schools-hosting-international-students>

[2] <http://www.ice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Document/2014/fieldRepCaseExamplesNov2014.pdf>

[3] <https://immigration.com/agencies/agency/dhs/ice>

[4] <https://immigration.com/profession/professionoccupation/students>

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