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U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

News Releases

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Record foreign student attendance highlights DHS "Open Doors" policy

Student visa program balances security, openness

WASHINGTON - The publication today of the 2009 Open Doors Report, the leading comprehensive account of international student enrollment throughout American institutions, shows that despite the global economic downturn, record numbers of international students are traveling to the United States to study at institutions of higher education.

Equally important, these numbers showcase the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Open Doors Policy of balancing efforts to secure the nation's student visa system while preserving the rich tradition of recruiting the best minds from around the world.

"More secure borders and ongoing openness are not mutually exclusive, and I think the success the United States is experiencing in attracting students from around the world proves this point," said Lou Farrell, Director of the Student Exchange and Visitor Program (SEVP) within U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). "The partnership ICE has developed with the academic community has been critical to our efforts, and we will need to maintain that partnership as our system continues to evolve."

At more than 670,000, the latest surge in foreign students choosing the United States marks a rate of growth not seen since 1980 and continues a pattern of continuous growth over the past three years.

The Sept. 11 terrorist attacks drew renewed attention to the student visa system after officials discovered that one of the hijackers, Hani Hanjour, entered on a student visa but never attended the university for which he had been granted a visa. Responding to congressional mandate, ICE developed web-based technology - the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) - to provide real-time management of records for schools and programs, students, exchange visitors, and their dependents throughout the duration of approved participation within the U.S. education system.

To learn more about the Student and Exchange Visitor Program, visit the website of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

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For review a copy of the Open Doors Report, visit the website of the [Institute of International Education](http://www.ice.gov/exec/leaving.asp?url=http://opendoors.iienetwork.org/) (<http://www.ice.gov/exec/leaving.asp?url=http://opendoors.iienetwork.org/>) .

-- ICE --

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.

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