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12/20/2019

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### ICE Acting Deputy Director sets the record straight on fraud investigations involving undercover schools

Acting Deputy Director Derek Benner addresses the public misconceptions about ICE Homeland Security Investigations' use of undercover schools —specifically the University of Farmington—to identify and disrupt attempts by foreign students and recruiters to exploit the nonimmigrant student visa system to remain in the country through fraud.

Dear Editor:

Over the past few weeks, the University of Farmington (Farmington), an undercover investigation run by Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), has been the focus of several media reports. These reports mischaracterized the purpose and rationale for the investigation, and I want to set the record straight. HSI is responsible for enforcing more than 400 federal statutes, including laws related to the student visa system. An estimated 1.2 million nonimmigrant students studied at more than 8,200 U.S. schools during 2018, promoting cultural exchange, providing billions of dollars to the U.S. economy, and contributing to research and development. Criminals and some students, however, exploit the student visa system, allowing foreign nationals to remain in the United States in violation of their nonimmigrant status.

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dangerous lack of accountability, but also diminishes the quality and integrity of the U.S. student visa system. Undercover investigations like this one provide law enforcement an inside look into how these networks operate, which was the primary purpose in establishing Farmington. The investigation provided HSI with a better understanding of how recruiters and others abuse the nonimmigrant student visa system. This, in turn, informs and improves DHS' efforts to uncover fraud at schools, provides insight into networks within the United States that facilitate such abuse, and serves as a deterrent to potential violators both in the short- and long-term.

As sworn civil servants, HSI special agents will continue to uphold the Constitution and protect the country's borders and immigration laws. The rules and regulations that govern the student visa system help protect the country from individuals who seek to abuse the system or remain illegally in the United States. HSI is responsible for investigating these kinds of violations, which is precisely what it did by establishing Farmington to investigate a complex fraud scheme used across the country to undermine U.S. laws and individuals' safety.

Sincerely,

Derek Benner, Acting Deputy Director, U.S Immigration and Customs Enforcement

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