

September 2016  
Volume 6, Issue 3

**1**  
Director's Corner

**2**  
Announcements  
SEVP Policy  
Reminders

**3**  
Field Representative  
Unit Update

**4**  
Contact Us

## DIRECTOR'S CORNER

# New Form I-17 Filing Process



*A message from  
Louis M. Farrell,  
Director of the  
Student and Exchange  
Visitor Program*

The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) values stakeholder feedback and works hard to incorporate the academic community's needs into our plans for improving our processes.

For example, last year, in response to stakeholder feedback, we amended the updates process for adding new designated school officials (DSOs) to Forms I-17, "Petition for Approval of School for Attendance by Nonimmigrant Student," by asking schools to submit a complete package of necessary evidence to SEVP when requesting the change.

This process enhancement streamlined these Form I-17 updates and allowed SEVP to implement a 10-day turnaround on all DSO update requests submitted with full, complete packages. Given the success of the DSO updates process change, we plan to replicate this upfront evidence concept for all Form I-17 submissions.

Beginning Oct. 1, 2016:

- School officials filing an initial petition must electronically submit

their school's evidence by scanning the documents and emailing them to [initial.sevis@ice.dhs.gov](mailto:initial.sevis@ice.dhs.gov).

- School officials submitting an update to an existing Form I-17 must electronically submit evidence by scanning the documents and emailing them to [update.sevis@ice.dhs.gov](mailto:update.sevis@ice.dhs.gov).
- School officials making any changes to the list of DSOs must electronically send the supporting evidence to [FormI17SupportingEvidence@ice.dhs.gov](mailto:FormI17SupportingEvidence@ice.dhs.gov).

As a reminder, the SEVP recertification process already requires schools to submit the necessary evidence when filing, and thus the recertification process will not be changing at this time.

The evidence your school provides to SEVP depends on the type of request, the program of study offered and your school's accreditation status. For comprehensive information about what evidence your school needs to submit given its circumstance, please visit the "Form I-17 Filing Evidence" tab in the [Operating Instructions](#) section of [ICE.gov/SEVP](http://ICE.gov/SEVP). Please note that definitions of evidence documents available on [ICE.gov](http://ICE.gov) are not exhaustive and

SEVP may ask your school to provide additional evidence for adjudication.

If your school fails to comply with the new Form I-17 filing process, SEVP may cancel your request and ask that you resubmit your request with the required evidence.

In the future, these improvements will expedite the entire SEVP certification process. By providing the necessary information upfront, SEVP adjudicators can efficiently review each request they receive and make informed decisions quickly.

The academic community's input was instrumental in making this process change a reality. We are excited for the opportunity to streamline our processes for our stakeholders. We understand this process change comes at a particularly busy time of year for most SEVP-certified schools and appreciate your patience and feedback as we implement the change.

Please reach out to the [SEVP Response Center](#) or contact your local SEVP field representative with questions or if you encounter issues. We appreciate your support and look forward to continuing our dialogue with the academic community.

All the best,  
Lou



**U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement**

# Trends and Improvements Section on Study in the States

In October 2016, the Trends and Improvements section will launch on Study in the States. This section will be the central repository for tracking and monitoring the government's progress and response on feedback received from the academic community. Study in the States will update the section regularly to increase government transparency and, when possible, provide timelines that will reflect the latest progress made on addressing stakeholder feedback.

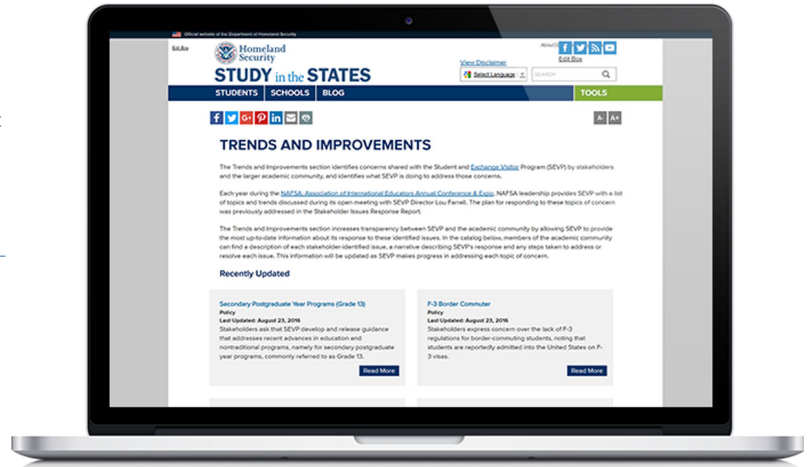
## SEVP Portal

In December 2016, the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) will [launch](#) the SEVP Portal for F-1 students participating in post-completion optional practical training (OPT). Through the portal, these students will be able to:

- Add or edit their phone number.
- Add or edit their mailing and physical address.
- Add or edit their employer information.

As an important note, students participating in a science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) OPT extension will not be able to add or edit employer information via the SEVP Portal at this time. Regulations require designated school officials (DSOs) to verify completeness of the [Form I-983, "Training Plan for STEM OPT Students,"](#) which includes employer information, and retain the form in the student's record. For more information about a DSO's role and the Form I-983, please visit [Study in the States](#).

Be on the lookout in November 2016 for a dedicated section on Study in the States explaining the SEVP Portal.



## SEVP POLICY REMINDERS

# Final Policy Guidance on the Form I-20 and the English Proficiency Field

Released in July 2016, the [SEVP Policy Guidance S13.2: The Form I-20 and the English Proficiency Field](#) emphasizes that if a school's program requires English proficiency as a standard for admission, the school can only issue the Form I-20, "Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status," after all standards for admission, including English proficiency, are met. If a school issued a Form I-20 incorrectly, before or after the guidance was published, it should correct the form as soon as possible.

Visit the [SEVP Guidance for Comment page](#) on Study in the States to view the latest draft and interim final policy guidance open for comment. Visit the "Policy Guidance" tab in the [Operating Instructions](#) section on [ICE.gov/SEVP](#) to learn more about SEVP final guidance and interim final guidance closed for comment.

# STEM OPT: Self-Employment versus Startup Businesses

Students participating in a 24-month STEM OPT extension must train with a bona fide employer who can sign the Form I-983. STEM OPT participants cannot provide employer attestation (i.e., signatures) on their own behalf.

Students may complete their training with a startup business, as long as all regulatory requirements are met. For information about the STEM OPT requirements, visit the [Study in the States STEM OPT Hub](#).

# Three Major Components to F-1/M-1 Program Management

For this issue of SEVP Spotlight, we sat down with Field Representative Leeanne Johnson. Ms. Johnson supports the [45th Student and Exchange Visitor Program \(SEVP\) field representative territory](#) and works with SEVP-certified schools across the state of Virginia.

Before serving as the Norfolk, Virginia-based field representative, I worked in international education for more than 20 years. During that time, I managed and directed the international student/immigration services offices at four public and private colleges and universities.

I dealt with medium- and large-sized student visa programs, and I also managed a smaller program with complicated, non-traditional, short-duration residencies. No matter the size of the program, I quickly realized there was much more involved with this work than just serving the students and that it was important for my supervisors, colleagues and students to understand this as well.

For those who have never worked as a principal designated school official (PDSO), it may seem natural to equate the workload in the international student/immigration services offices with the number of students served.

However, the reality is whether you have 10 or 1,000 international students enrolled at your school, the PDSO still bears the same major responsibilities for F-1/M-1 program management. PDSOs must manage and be well-versed in three major components: student issues, Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) user issues and SEVP certification issues. I have outlined some of the responsibilities for each of the three major components below.

## STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Issuing Forms I-20, "Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status," in accordance with federal regulations and SEVP policy guidance.
- Maintaining accurate record keeping and reporting within established deadlines (e.g., SEVIS registration reporting at the start of each term/session, changes to student/Form I-20 information/program completion dates, address and employer reporting, change of level or transfer of student records).
- Educating and advising students about their F-1/M-1 rules, responsibilities, benefits and procedures.
- Determining eligibility for and processing things like employment recommendations, curricular practical training authorizations, Reduced Course Loads, Form I-20 program extensions and travel signatures, when appropriate.
- Working through any SEVIS record correction requests with the SEVP Response Center.
- Assisting the students with challenges that arise with visa applications, Form I-515A and port-of-entry issues, USCIS/SSA/DMV matters, etc.

## KNOWLEDGE AND SEVIS USER RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Staying abreast of SEVP regulations, policy guidance, fact sheets and correspondences (including the broadcast messages and SEVP Spotlight newsletters) to ensure your school is maintaining compliance.

- Keeping up with SEVP webinars, SEVIS user manuals/job aids/FAQs/user guides and new SEVIS releases to make sure you are properly managing student records when using SEVIS. Some of the new SEVIS releases are more involved than others and include many important functionality changes and resources to help you understand how the changes will impact SEVIS users.
- Logging into SEVIS at least once a month to keep your account active and watch for alerts, even if you do not have any F-1/M-1 students enrolled at your school.

*Note: For many PDSOs and designated school officials (DSOs), this component might also involve understanding the policies and procedures of many other federal agencies, including but not limited to the U.S. Department of State, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, the Social Security Administration, the Internal Revenue Service and your state's Department of Motor Vehicles.*

## CERTIFICATION RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Establishing policies and procedures to help ensure your school's compliance with SEVP regulations and requirements.
- Ensuring all DSOs have thorough knowledge of the policies, procedures and regulations governing F-1/M-1 nonimmigrant students.
- Serving as the main point of contact for all matters pertaining to your school's compliance with regulations, and for system alerts generated by SEVIS.
- Keeping your school's Form I-17, "Petition for Approval of School for Attendance by Nonimmigrant Student," up to date at all times and reporting material changes in accordance with regulations.
- Responding to requests for evidence (RFEs) your school receives from SEVP within the specified deadlines.
- Filing for recertification every two years and properly responding to any RFEs or notices from SEVP by specified deadlines.
- Completing special projects by SEVP's deadlines. For example, completing the annual SEVIS User/DSO Verification in a timely manner or ensuring that all your students had the redesigned Form I-20 (without the bar code) by the July 2016 deadline.

*Note: SEVP operates on a 12-month cycle, so in order to maintain compliance and SEVP certification, the PDSO at all SEVP-certified schools must be prepared to receive and respond to SEVP correspondences and deadlines on a yearly basis.*

I understand, appreciate and respect the important and difficult work PDSOs and DSOs do to help strengthen our national security. Such responsibilities include ensuring data integrity and timely reporting in SEVIS, and adherence to SEVP regulations, policies and procedures. While serving as a PDSO, I always had a great appreciation for SEVP's strong customer service approach. Since joining SEVP, I have come to learn that the program has a very talented and dedicated team that works hard to assist you as a school official, listen to your feedback and improve the processes, procedures, resources and reporting methods that we have in place. I encourage you to take advantage of the many free resources available to you via [ICE.gov/SEVP](https://ice.dhs.gov/SEVP), [Study in the States](#) and your local [field representatives](#), and I hope these suggestions are helpful to you.

## CONTACT US

# SEVP Contacts

The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) is dedicated to maintaining open communication with international students and academic officials. SEVP has multiple contact options:

Our offices are open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. EDT, except holidays

**Phone:** 703-603-3400

**Email:** [SEVP@ice.dhs.gov](mailto:SEVP@ice.dhs.gov)

**Find us on the web:**

[www.ice.gov/sevp](http://www.ice.gov/sevp)

<http://studyinthestates.dhs.gov>

**Follow us on Twitter** [@StudyinStates](https://twitter.com/StudyinStates)

**Like Study in the States on** [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/StudyinStates)

If you need assistance with passwords or Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) technical help, call the SEVIS Help Desk at 800-892-4829 between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. EDT or email [SEVISHelpDesk@ice.dhs.gov](mailto:SEVISHelpDesk@ice.dhs.gov)

*Disclaimer: The information presented in the SEVP Spotlight is provided for informational purposes only and should not be considered legal advice.*

## ICE Contacts

To report national vulnerabilities or national security concerns:

Contact ICE's **Counterterrorism and Criminal Exploitation Unit** at [CTCEU@dhs.gov](mailto:CTCEU@dhs.gov)

To report exploitation of student visa programs:

Contact your local **HSI special agent**, call 1-866-DHS-2ICE (1-866-347-2423) or visit [www.ice.gov](http://www.ice.gov)

