



SEVIS Survey

AACRAO has conducted a survey of its membership to gauge the satisfaction level of institutions of higher education that participate in the federal Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) administered by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. The survey intends to measure participants' contentment at the first anniversary of the federally-mandated SEVIS implementation deadline and was prompted by the General Accounting Office. The survey was conducted from February 2, 2004 to March 8, 2004 and received 601 responses.

Conclusions

- SEVIS has increased workload for over 80 percent of campuses nationwide.
- Over 50 percent of institutions that participate in SEVIS have received NO training.
- Forty-eight percent of institutions have continued to experience problems with SEVIS since the federally-mandated implementation deadline in Jan. 2003.
- SEVIS has had an impact on recruitment and enrollment of international students.
- Half of all institutions believe that the proposed SEVIS fee collection mechanism is inadequate.

SEVIS Functionality

Overall, 57.6 percent of institutions reported having problems with the SEVIS system. A variety of problems were reported, including data integrity issues and overall functionality most prominently. For example:

- Unlike the assignment of a Social Security Number, SEVIS does not maintain one SEVIS identification number for the duration of a student's studies in the United States.
- Lack of DHS-administered training for school officials.
- Help Desk: Long wait times when calling for assistance and inconsistent counsel from SEVIS Help Desk workers.
- Data Fixes: The inability of a Designated School Official (DSO) to make minor data fixes (ie. Spelling) to student information submitted to the system; sometimes excessive lengths of time before data fixes are reflected in SEVIS.

- Inconsistent student Point of Entry (POE) information entered into the system by DHS officials at the POE.
- Inter-agency Cooperation: Slow Data Transmission from SEVIS to Social Security Administration and U.S. Consulates abroad.
- Transfer Students: In violation of federal SEVIS regulations, institutions are forced to “register” transfer students before the student’s SEVIS record may be passed on to the enrolling institution when a student decides to attend another institution.
- Inaccurate student status listed in SEVIS (ie. Student listed as “active” when status should have reflected “initial.”
- Optional Practical Training (OPT): SEVIS Definition of “completed” is inconsistent with higher education institution definition of the term resulting in confusion and errors; system is unable to differentiate part- and full-time work; inability of system to accommodate more than 12 months of training.

Resolving Problems

Of institutions reporting problems, 52.3 percent said that progress had been made in addressing their problem(s) since the federally-mandated January 2003 implementation deadline. Approximately 32.1 percent claimed that no progress had been made and 15.6 percent said that the problem(s) had become more pronounced. Forty seven percent of institutions reporting problems described the responsiveness of DHS or its contractor EDS in resolving their problem as “excellent” or “good.” As the chart below shows, institutions offering undergraduate and graduate/professional degrees (4+year) were significantly more likely to rate DHS/EDS performance as “poor” or “fair.” Four-year-plus institutions comprise the only subgroup of institutional types in which at least 50 percent of institutions did not rate DHS/EDS performance as either good or excellent. Four-year (undergraduate only) institutions were the most satisfied.

How would you describe the responsiveness of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) or its contractor, EDS, in resolving these problems?

Crosstab against institution type

	2-Year	4-Year	4+year	Grad/Prof
Excellent	6.3%	7.5%	4.5%	4.3%
Good	49.4%	57.5%	36.2%	47.8%
Fair	34.2%	27.5%	47.3%	34.8%
Poor	10.1%	7.5%	12.1%	13.0%

Of those institutions that had called the help desk, 62.1 percent said their call was handled promptly. Only 4.2 percent of institutions reported never calling for assistance.

Most of the specific remaining issues reported by institutions as unresolved concerned usability/functionality issues and peak load delays, but a handful of respondents claimed that their data integrity issues have not been addressed.

Institution Issues

Training

Public two-year and four-year-plus institutions were the most likely to receive SEVIS training from INS/DHS or a private firm. Surprisingly, institutions that received dedicated training either from INS/DHS or an outside firm (46.9 percent of total) had a greater instance of problems than institutions receiving no training at all. Sixty-nine percent of INS/DHS trained institutions reported experiencing problems as did 67 percent of those trained by private firms while only 48.5 percent of institutions that received no training reported problems. Two-year and four-year-plus institutions were more likely to have received SEVIS training than four-year or graduate/professional schools.

Did your institution receive dedicated SEVIS training?

Crosstab against type of institution

	Total	2-Year	4-Year	4+year	Grad/Prof
INS/DHS	12.6%	10.1%	15.2%	14.5%	2.3%
Private Firm	34.3%	36.2%	19.6%	38.4%	29.5%
None	53.1%	53.7%	65.2%	47.1%	68.2%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Public institutions were slightly more likely than private to receive SEVIS training.

Did your institution receive dedicated SEVIS training?

Crosstab against control of institution¹

	Public	Private
INS/DHS	14.5%	11.6%
Private Firm	36.2%	30.9%
None	49.3%	57.5%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

Institutions with larger full-time enrollment were more likely to receive dedicated SEVIS training than smaller institutions.

Did your institution receive dedicated SEVIS training?

Crosstab against full-time enrollment of institution

	Under 500	500 - 999	1,000 - 2,499	2,500 - 4,999	5,000 - 9,999	10,000 - 19,999	20,000 - 29,999	30,000 - 39,999	40,000 or more
Total	63	81	144	105	79	66	32	13	9
INS/DHS	4.8%	9.9%	14.6%	10.5%	13.9%	13.6%	12.5%	38.5%	33.3%
Private Firm	27.0%	29.6%	33.3%	39.0%	40.5%	37.9%	31.3%	23.1%	33.3%
No	68.3%	60.5%	52.1%	50.5%	45.6%	48.5%	56.3%	38.5%	33.3%

¹ Proprietary institution response size was not sufficiently large for a meaningful analysis.

Recruitment

When asked whether SEVIS had an impact on enrollment or recruitment of foreign students and exchange visitors, 34.8 percent of institutions claimed the system harmed their efforts. About 5 percent claimed SEVIS helped with recruitment and enrollment and 60 percent reported no impact. Four year plus institutions were much more likely to claim that SEVIS harmed their enrollment/recruitment efforts.

Has SEVIS had an impact on enrollment/recruitment efforts?

Crosstab against type of institution

	2-Year	4-Year	4+year	Grad/Prof
Helped	7.3%	7.5%	3.6%	4.5%
Harmed	30.0%	20.4%	45.1%	11.4%
No impact	62.7%	72.0%	51.3%	84.1%

Office Workload

When asked if SEVIS had impacted their institution's workload, 82.9 percent of respondents indicated their workloads had increased. Forty-four percent said SEVIS had caused significant increases and 39.4 percent reported that workloads had "somewhat increased." Nine percent reported no change and 8.4 percent reported decreased workloads. Four-year- plus universities again felt the greatest impact from SEVIS implementation and use. Over 50 percent of those institutions characterized the impact of SEVIS on office workload as significant.

Has SEVIS had an impact on office workload?

Crosstab against type of institution

	2-Year	4-Year	4+year	Grad/Prof	Total
Significantly decreased	1.3%	2.2%	0.6%	2.3%	1.3%
Somewhat decreased	6.0%	12.1%	5.5%	13.6%	6.0%
No change	8.7%	16.5%	5.5%	13.6%	8.7%
Somewhat increased	48.0%	49.5%	30.6%	52.3%	48.0%
Significantly increased	36.0%	19.8%	57.7%	18.2%	36.0%

SEVIS Fee

When asked how their institution viewed the proposed manner in which the SEVIS fee will be collected, 10.8 percent described the collection mechanism as "adequate" while 49.7 percent said "inadequate." A total of 39.5 percent had no opinion.

Notes and Methodology

The survey was performed by the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers over a period beginning on February 2, 2004 and ending March 8, 2004. Respondents were limited to AACRAO membership and institutions were asked to coordinate their responses so that they submitted data only once. Institutions were asked to define themselves by type and control. For type, respondents were given a choice of two-year (undergraduate), four-year (undergraduate), four-plus-year (graduate and undergraduate), and graduate/professional only. For control, respondents were asked to choose between public (not-for profit), private (not-for-profit) and proprietary (for-profit). For questions, please contact Cody Brumfield at brumfieldc@aacrao.org.