



U.S. Visa Policy and 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 is a follow-up to a similar 2004 SEVIS satisfaction survey and intends to measure participant contentment after the second anniversary of the federally-mandated SEVIS implementation deadline. This follow-up survey was prompted by the Government Accountability Office (formerly the General Accounting Office), the nonpartisan investigative agency of Congress. The survey was conducted from March 14, 2005 to May 14, 2005 and received a total of 384 responses. Of the total number of respondents, 283 included demographic information in their response and as such, cross-tabulations that include state, control, type or enrollment reflect only these respondents.

Conclusions

- The majority of SEVIS-participating institutions (82 percent) interface with the system using the Web portal option and not batch processing.
- Seventy-five percent of respondents report that SEVIS has increased workload on campus administrators.
- A greater number of institutions report experiencing problems with SEVIS in year two of implementation (54 percent) than was reported in year one (48 percent).
- About one-third of respondents (32 percent) say that SEVIS has harmed recruitment and enrollment of international students on their campus, and 57 percent say that their international student yield has decreased since the tracking system was mandated.
- Eighty-two percent of responding institutions that have experienced a decrease in international student yield attribute it to visa difficulties.
- Sixty-six percent of respondents attribute their decreased international student yield in part to the fees—like the SEVIS user fee and visa application fee—associated with international student visas.

SEVIS Functionality

Institutions that participate in SEVIS overwhelmingly report (82 percent) that they manually enter international student information into the tracking system through the Web portal offered by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. The remaining 18 percent of respondents indicate that they interface with SEVIS by uploading student information via batch processing. Of institutions that use batch processing, the largest cohort (57 institutions; 17 percent) are of the four-plus year type.

What type of SEVIS interface does your institution use?

Crosstab by institution type

| | Batch | Web Portal | Unknown | Total |
|---|-------|------------|---------|-------|
| 2 year (undergraduate) | 5 | 58 | 0 | 63 |
| 4 year (undergraduate) | 3 | 38 | 3 | 44 |
| 4+ year (undergraduate, graduate and/or professional) | 47 | 109 | 1 | 157 |
| Graduate/Professional Only | 3 | 14 | 2 | 19 |
| Total | 58 | 219 | 6 | 283 |

When asked if the institution has experienced problems with SEVIS within the last 12 months (year two—Jan. 2004 – Jan. 2005), 54 percent of institutions responded affirmatively and 46 percent responded “no.” While the percentage of institutions that indicate they experienced problems is virtually the same as the percentage in the 2004 AACRAO survey, almost two-thirds (73 percent) of respondents to the 2005 survey indicate the frequency of problems to be less-than-monthly. Eighty-six percent of batch users report experiencing problems in year two as do over half (54 percent) of respondents that use the Web portal to interface with SEVIS.

| Problems Experienced by User Interface | | | |
|--|-------|------------|-------|
| | Batch | Web Portal | Total |
| Yes | 86.2% | 54.0% | 60.4% |
| No | 13.8% | 46.0% | 39.6% |
| Total | 100% | 100% | 100% |

| Frequency of Problems by User Interface | | | |
|---|-------|------------|-------|
| | Batch | Web Portal | Total |
| Daily | 7.9% | 0.4% | 1.9% |
| Weekly | 19.0% | 6.7% | 9.2% |
| Monthly | 27.0% | 12.3% | 15.2% |
| Less-than-monthly | 46.0% | 80.6% | 73.7% |
| Total | 100% | 100% | 100% |

Overall, 60 percent of institutions reported having problems with SEVIS in year two, a number slightly higher than the percentage of respondents who reported problems in year one of implementation. A variety of issues were reported including data integrity issues most prominently. Data-fix issues were reported by an overwhelming number of respondents and other common problems include:

- Longstanding data-fix delays;
- Inaccurate change of status reflected in SEVIS
- Inaccurate OPT status reflected in student's SEVIS record (ie. students who've been granted OPT remain listed as "pending");
- Eliminations or termination of students without alert;
- Alerts not being sent out;
- Inconsistent information from various regulatory authorities (ie. SEVIS Help Desk, Regional Service Center, counselor officials, and DHS)
- Port of entry inconsistencies from immigration officers.

Almost all respondents (91 percent) had called the SEVIS Help Desk within the past 12 months. Of those who called, 70 percent indicated their call was handled promptly while 30 percent encountered a significant wait.

Institutional Issues

Enrollment & Recruiting

Slightly less than one-third of respondents indicated that SEVIS has harmed their enrollment and/or recruiting of international students and exchange visitors. Of the 119 respondents who felt SEVIS harmed their enrollment or recruiting, 91 were asked extended demographic questions. Seventy-three percent of the 91 have a total full-time enrollment of 9,999 or fewer students. Notably, 5.9 percent of all respondents indicated that SEVIS has helped their enrollment/recruiting efforts while 62 percent said SEVIS has had no impact at all.

Has SEVIS had an impact on enrolment/recruiting of international students and exchange visitors?

Crosstab by enrollment

| Size of Institution by Reported Harmful Impact | Number of institutions reporting harm to Enrollment/ Recruiting Efforts | Percentage of Total Respondents that Report Harm |
|--|---|--|
| Under 500 | 8 | 9% |
| 500 – 999 | 10 | 11% |
| 1,000 – 2,499 | 11 | 12% |
| 2,500 - 4,999 | 18 | 20% |
| 5,000 - 9,999 | 19 | 21% |
| 10,000 - 19,999 | 11 | 12% |
| 20,000 - 29,999 | 9 | 10% |
| 30,000 - 39,999 | 1 | 1% |
| 40,000 or more | 4 | 4% |
| Total | 91 | 100% |

Has SEVIS had an impact on enrolment/recruiting of international students and exchange visitors?

Crosstab by type of institution

| | Helped | Harmed | No Impact |
|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| 2-year | 3 | 23 | 36 |
| 4-year | 4 | 13 | 26 |
| 4+-year | 8 | 49 | 96 |
| Graduate/Professional Only | 1 | 6 | 10 |
| Total | 16 | 91 | 168 |

Office Workload

When asked if U.S. visa policy and/or SEVIS had impacted their institution's workload, 75 percent of respondents reported an increase. This finding has slightly decreased from the AACRAO 2004 survey which indicated 83 percent of institutions had faced an increased workload due to U.S. visa policy and/or SEVIS. In the current survey, 37.5 percent of respondents cited a "somewhat increased" workload compared with 39 percent in 2004; and 37.5 percent noted "significantly increased" workload compared with 2004 respondents who reported at a rate of 50 percent.

Has U.S. Visa Policy/SEVIS had an impact on your office workload?

2005 response compared with 2004 response

| | Percentage of 2005 Survey Respondents | Percentage of 2004 Survey Respondents |
|-------------------------|--|--|
| Significantly decreased | 1.6% | 1.2% |
| Somewhat decreased | 7.7% | 7.2% |
| No change | 15.8% | 8.6% |
| Somewhat increased | 37.5% | 39.6% |
| Significantly increased | 37.5% | 43.4% |

International Student Enrollment

Fifty-seven percent of respondents said that U.S. visa policy/SEVIS has caused international student yield to decrease at their institution. Less than 6 percent say yield has increased since SEVIS was mandated and 37 percent report that they've experienced no change in international student yield since SEVIS was implemented.

When asked if a decrease in international student yield can be causally-attributed to visa difficulties, 82 percent of respondents indicated yes in some way. Fifty-percent of respondents said visa difficulties were a problem for "some students;" 27 percent said "yes, for the majority of international students" at their institution; and 4.7 percent indicated "yes, for all international students" at their institution.

Similarly, 66 percent of respondents indicated that their decreased yield could be causally-attributed in varying degrees to the fees associated with international student visas. Twenty-five percent of respondents indicated that the fee has "moderately impacted" their international student yield and 3 percent said the fees have "severely impacted yield."

| Effect of Fee | Total | Percent |
|-----------------------------------|-------|---------|
| Fee has not impacted yield | 92 | 33.6% |
| Fee has minimally impacted yield | 106 | 38.7% |
| Fee has moderately impacted yield | 67 | 24.5% |
| Fee has severely impacted yield | 9 | 3.3% |
| Total | 274 | 100.0% |

When presented with a list of programs and asked in which programs international student yield had decreased since SEVIS was mandated, respondents indicated the following:

| Program | Total | Percent |
|--|-------|---------|
| Graduate Math / Science | 33 | 9% |
| Professional medical programs | 10 | 3% |
| Graduate Engineering / Information Technology | 35 | 9% |
| Graduate, other programs | 77 | 20% |
| Undergraduate math / science | 33 | 9% |
| Undergraduate pre-medical / nursing | 19 | 5% |
| Undergraduate engineering / information technology | 44 | 11% |
| Undergraduate, other | 161 | 42% |
| ESL | 55 | 14% |

Country-by-Country Enrollment

Respondents were asked to indicate if they had noticed a significant increase or decrease in international student yield from a series of regions and countries that have been

determined by the Institute of International Education (IIE) to be the leading areas of origin for international students that study in the United States.

| Country/Region | Total Responses | Decreased Yield | Percent | Increased Yield | Percent | No Change | Percent |
|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------|-----------------|---------|-----------|---------|
| China | 272 | 108 | 39.7% | 24 | 8.8% | 140 | 51.5% |
| India | 262 | 90 | 34.4% | 33 | 12.6% | 139 | 53.1% |
| Korea | 265 | 67 | 25.3% | 45 | 17.0% | 153 | 57.7% |
| Japan | 263 | 79 | 30.0% | 27 | 10.3% | 157 | 59.7% |
| Canada | 260 | 36 | 13.8% | 31 | 11.9% | 193 | 74.2% |
| Taiwan | 253 | 54 | 21.3% | 25 | 9.9% | 174 | 68.8% |
| Mexico | 259 | 39 | 15.1% | 27 | 10.4% | 193 | 74.5% |
| Russia | 249 | 42 | 16.9% | 17 | 6.8% | 190 | 76.3% |
| Middle East | 265 | 116 | 43.8% | 14 | 5.3% | 135 | 50.9% |
| Africa | 280 | 117 | 41.8% | 37 | 13.2% | 126 | 45.0% |
| Western Europe | 256 | 52 | 20.3% | 18 | 7.0% | 186 | 72.7% |
| Eastern Europe | 252 | 51 | 20.2% | 24 | 9.5% | 177 | 70.2% |

Notes and Methodology

The survey was preformed by the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers over a period beginning on March 14, 2005 and ending May 14, 2005. 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 (undergraduate and graduate) 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 regarding survey results and/or content please contact Shelley Rodgers (RodgersS@aacrao.org) and for methodological inquiries please contact Cody Brumfield (BrumfieldC@aacrao.org).