



**United States Department of State**

*Assistant Secretary of State  
for Consular Affairs*

*Washington, D.C. 20520*

### **Statement on International Education Week**

by Assistant Secretary Janice Jacobs, Bureau of Consular Affairs

During International Education Week, we celebrate the diversity foreign students bring to campuses around the United States and acknowledge the invaluable experiences of American students abroad. When foreign students sit side-by-side with American students in classrooms around the world, they exchange new ideas, challenge old stereotypes, and gain immeasurable knowledge from and about each other.

The Bureau of Consular Affairs recognizes the importance of this personal interaction that results in unparalleled mutual understanding and international cooperation. We strive to support American students abroad as well as qualified foreign students seeking to come to the United States.

Consular officers are actively engaging with American students overseas to provide them personal safety tips along with routine and emergency services. Whether they seek assistance in voting or need to replace a stolen passport, we are committed to facilitating a safe and secure overseas experience for these American students. In the United States, we conduct active outreach to study abroad organizations and programs to help students prepare for their trips abroad and make the most of what we hope will be a meaningful, enriching experience.

Our consular sections overseas also work actively to promote study and exchange programs, to demystify the visa application process, and to encourage students to consider educational possibilities in the United States. Foreign students can now apply for their visas 120 days before their U.S. studies begin. At our embassies and consulates around the world, we assign a high priority to student visa appointments, resulting in reduced wait times, shorter lines, and faster issuance of visas. We issued over 450,000 student visas in the last fiscal year, which accounts for 82 percent of the student visa applicants worldwide. That's an increase of 13 percent from the previous year and exceeds the number of student visas we were issuing immediately before the September 11 attack.

We also recognize that community colleges play an important role in our higher education system by increasing access to career-relevant skills, providing intensive English language instruction, and preparing students for further study. Diversity is one of the strengths of the U.S. educational system, where students can choose from over 4,000 accredited higher education institutions and transfer from one institution to another. Therefore, we strongly support legitimate, qualified students embarking on studies at community colleges.

U.S. universities and colleges enjoy pre-eminence throughout the world and our campuses flourish in a climate of international exchange. American students overseas and foreign students in the United States contribute greatly to global awareness and mutual understanding, and our country and our world are richer for it.