

August 20, 2021

Secretary Antony Blinken
U.S. Department of State
2201 C St NW
Washington, DC 20520

Secretary Gina Raimondo
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave NW
Washington, DC 20230

Secretary Miguel Cardona
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202

Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas
Department of Homeland Security
245 Murray LN, SW
Washington, DC 20528

VIA EMAIL

Re: Recommendations to include the English language program sector in the renewed commitment to international education

Dear Secretaries Blinken, Cardona, Raimondo and Mayorkas:

The [Joint Statement of Principles](#) from the U.S. Departments of State and Education, and supported by Departments of Commerce and Homeland Security is a welcome endorsement of the many benefits international education brings to all Americans, and as a community of associations and agencies focused on supporting quality international education, we are encouraged that multiple federal agencies recognize that the United States government has a unique role in international education and have expressed a commitment to undertaking actions to support a renewed focus on international education.

As an important facet of international education, post-secondary, accredited English language programs must be included in the renewed U.S. commitment to international education. Post-secondary, accredited U.S. intensive and pathway English language programs serve the diverse linguistic needs of international students and scholars. Some serve as an access point into the U.S. higher education system; others offer short-term opportunities to learn English for personal or professional development; yet all create innovative English language offerings that support U.S. businesses, government agencies, and international partnerships.

In addition to helping students achieve linguistic competency, all English language programs help students to develop cross-cultural communication skills and enhance self-awareness and understanding of diverse perspectives. English language programs positively impact local economies while providing their students the support services they need to engage in and become members of the local communities where they study. In sum, English language programs serve a valuable role in international education, and the variety of accredited program types contribute to making the United States a top study destination, whether they are university/college-based programs or privately-owned institutions.

International students who pursue English language studies at the post-secondary level must attend a school that is accredited by an agency recognized by the United States Department of Education as a reliable authority on education quality. Recognized accrediting agencies like the Accrediting Council for Continuing Education & Training (ACCET) and the Commission on English Language Program Accreditation (CEA) accredit programs and institutions that serve international students who pursue full-time English language or pathway programs. Accreditation agencies have education quality assurance as their core mission and primary focus, and partner with the federal government and state regulatory agencies to ensure high-quality post-secondary educational opportunities for international students, including those who pursue English language training. ACCET and

CEA judiciously guard their separate and independent status as accreditors but stand in solidarity with our international education colleagues in their response to the joint statement of principles.

On behalf of the English language program sector, our associations strongly support the actions set forth in the Joint Statement such as: (1) embracing a coordinated national approach to international education; (2) incorporating a strong focus on international education as part of the nation's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic; (3) welcoming international students, researchers, scholars, and educators to the United States in a safe and secure manner; (4) promoting expanded access to international education; and (5) fostering increased cooperation among the federal government, the private sector, and educational institutions.

We also embrace the [recommendations](#) made by NAFSA: Association of International Educators to develop a national strategy for international education. We strongly recommend that a national recruitment strategy include the promotion of English language study in U.S. accredited English language programs. We agree with NAFSA that the recruitment strategy should engage "a broader number of U.S. institutions" and we believe that this includes the spectrum of accredited English language program types.

We also support NAFSA's recommendation that the current administration creates a coordinating entity at the White House level that would ensure success and collaboration of all the necessary government agencies in implementing a first-ever national recruitment strategy. Additionally, we ask the State Department to release a cable to diplomatic and consular posts similar to [one issued in 2005](#) that provides guidance in how to interpret the immigrant intent provisions when adjudicating student visa applications. We recommend that the cable address the following items: (1) focusing on the student applicant's immediate and near-term intent, including learning English in the United States prior to starting degree study; (2) acknowledging the students' right to choose where they will obtain an education if accepted by the school rather than determining that the applicant should take equivalent English courses in their country of residence; and (3) adjudicating on their bona fides as student applicants regardless of chosen institution or program type, given that all accredited and SEVP-certified legitimate schools must be accorded the same weight under the law.

We are eager to support the current administration in this renewed commitment to international education through joint effort and collaboration. We urge the administration to include key stakeholders that reflect all facets of international education, including English language training, in the development of a coordinated U.S. international student recruitment strategy to which our associations can contribute and thus support U.S.-based English language training and the overall international recruitment goals of the United States. It is imperative for the United States to remain the destination of choice for international students, scholars, researchers, and educators, and that vibrant and diverse English language programs can and should play a part in supporting that goal.

Submitted by:

- EnglishUSA (American Association of Intensive English Programs), <https://www.englishusa.org/>
- NAFSA: Association of International Educators, <https://www.nafsa.org/>
- TESOL International Association, <https://www.tesol.org/>
- UCIEP, Consortium of University and College Intensive English Programs, <https://www.uciep.org/>

With support from

- Accrediting Council for Continuing Education & Training (ACCET), <https://accet.org/>
- Commission on English Language Program Accreditation (CEA), <https://cea-accredit.org/>