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XC: Luyen Phan

Student and Exchange Visitor Program

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
500 12th St SW
Washington, DC 20536



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

Robert Oden A Jr
Carleton College
One North College Street
Northfield, Minnesota 55057-4001

NOV 2 2009

RE: SEVIS II / College and University Staff Managing International Students, Faculty and Researchers

Dear Robert Oden A Jr:

Although you have probably never heard my name, which is Lou Farrell, I have spent countless hours with key members of your staff and our work together directly affects your school's bottom line. I am the Director of the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) at the Department of Homeland Security's Immigration Customs and Enforcement. Having such a title means I am the face and name that you can associate with the policy that oversees the presence of international students and exchange visitors (i.e., international faculty and researchers) at your campus.

And, without knowing me, I would like to ask you to consider doing me a favor.

But first, here is some background on SEVP. It was mandated by Congress after the events of September 11, 2001 and the program plays an integral role in the nation's efforts to secure our borders, while maintaining its long history of welcoming international students and exchange visitors to your campuses to advance the cultural exchange of ideas, emphasize the importance of openness, and enhance the economic value these students and international faculty and researchers provide.

Your school plays an active role in ensuring that this tradition continues. In the spring, SEVP hosted a conference in Virginia for school officials from colleges and universities across the country that assist international students/scholars. We provided those officials with the very latest programmatic and system enhancement updates with regards to the upcoming release of the next generation of the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS II). Operated by SEVP, this is the web-based system that your international school officials use to assist us in providing better and timelier verification of information about those individuals entering the country on a student visa. It's important for you to know—in order for the entire system to work smoothly and successfully, SEVP depends heavily on the international school officials at your institution.

That is the reason for my letter.

I know of no other group like these international school officials who handle so many pressures so successfully.

They are unique in America in that they are the only group whose good and diligent work determines the success of the very Federal agency that regulates their activities. And they are doing this while serving five masters—their academic institutions, international students, faculty and researchers, the Federal government and their families.

They have provided SEVP with thousands of improvements to SEVIS I (the current system), and they are key players in the proper development of SEVIS II. They provide critical feedback on the policies and regulations SEVP is drafting, and they do so in a most professional manner.

They are your front line, “in the trenches” people who manage your international students and scholars. It is they who ultimately shape the environment encountered by your international students which, in turn, can affect whether the students and their friends back home decide to come to the U.S. to study. It’s no small feat. Global education is vital to the economic viability of your institution and the American academic community in general. It is estimated to have a \$15 billion annual impact on the U.S. economy.

Beginning this November your international education staff members will be under heavy pressure to begin the transition to SEVIS II simultaneous with the demands of managing the current international students in SEVIS I. The workload will greatly increase, as will the associated stresses and pressures.

As your international education staff enters this critical period of transition I encourage you to continue to recognize your staff members’ efforts. Know that any additional resources they can be given will be appreciated and utilized. And, any assistance that offices across your campus can give them will go far in supporting them as they play a vital role in implementing SEVIS II.

It’s a momentous time for SEVP, and your international education staff members are crucial to our success. I encourage you to meet with these staff members in the coming weeks and address their concerns. They are truly remarkable people and I’ve been thoroughly impressed with their diligence and cooperation with this Federal agency. We’re making better policy and enacting better systems because of them.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions you may have.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Louis M. Farrell". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the typed name.

Louis M. Farrell
Director