



**Homeland  
Security**

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# News Release

## **SEVIS PROGRAM MARKS ONE-YEAR MILESTONE**

*Former paper based system is today recognized for efficiency, innovation*

WASHINGTON — The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is marking the one-year anniversary of the requirement for all international student and exchange visitors to register with the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) by noting the progress that the web-based student registration system has made in its first twelve months.

SEVIS was established as a nationwide system for maintaining information on foreign students and exchange visitors to the United States. SEVIS also allows schools and federal authorities to manage the traffic of international students and exchange visitors into and out of the United States. In its first year, the program was a striking success, streamlining the process for international students and visitors entering the United States. In June, SEVIS was recognized with the E-Gov Institute's Pioneer Award for best practices in improved operations through innovative applications and streamlined processes.

“The vast majority of students who come to the United States do so to benefit from our academic institutions. Unfortunately, a few of those purporting to come here for that purpose have exploited the system to cause us harm,” said Michael J. Garcia, DHS Assistant Secretary for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). “The worst examples are those who have committed terrorist acts on our soil, such as the driver of the explosive-laden van in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing and a number of the 9/11 hijackers. SEVIS helps ensure that people coming here to study do just that, and puts the rule of law back into our immigration system by ensuring that violators will face consequences.”

In the SEVIS program's first year, 8,737 schools and exchange visitor programs, representing more than 9,500 campuses have been certified to participate in the program. As of July 2004, there are more than 770,000 students and exchange visitors (F-1, M-1 and J-1 visa categories) approved to study in the United States whose data is being managed by SEVIS. In addition, SEVIS maintains records on more than 100,000 dependents of students and exchange visitors.

“We welcome foreign students to our country. Through SEVIS, U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers can quickly verify that students presenting themselves at our borders are actual students and exchange visitors,” said U.S. Customs and Border Protection Commissioner Robert C. Bonner. “The program is a necessity in the post-9/11 environment to ensure that terrorists do not enter our country under false pretenses.”

Anticipating that many schools, individual students and exchange visitors might have difficulty meeting the August 1, 2003, compliance date, ICE created a special SEVIS Response Team (SRT) to assist students and exchange visitors who may not have been registered in the SEVIS system by the deadline.

The SRT worked with U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers, adjudicators, investigators, schools and individual students and exchange visitors to resolve issues related to admission into the United States. Between August 2003 and February 2004, the SRT experienced a dramatic decline in the volume of cases and calls – an indication that CBP officers at ports of entry have become more proficient in using SEVIS to determine the admission eligibility of international students arriving to the United States. SEVIS improvements, including a 24-hour-a-day SEVIS Help Desk, have rendered the SRT unnecessary this fall.

Under Secretary for Border and Transportation Security Asa Hutchinson offered the keynote address at a forum to evaluate SEVIS’ first-year successes yesterday at the Heritage Foundation. Hutchinson emphasized the importance of SEVIS to the U.S. immigration system and how SEVIS has helped facilitate international students coming into the United States to study.

Additional information on the Student Exchange Visitor Program and SEVIS, including fact sheets in multiple languages, can be found on the web at [www.ICE.gov/sevis](http://www.ICE.gov/sevis).

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*U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), responsible for the enforcement of border, economic, infrastructure and transportation security laws. ICE seeks to prevent acts of terrorism by targeting the people, money and materials that support terrorism and criminal networks.*