



The Honorable Michael R. Pompeo  
U.S. Department of State  
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable Chad F. Wolf  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, DC 20528

October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Dear Secretary Pompeo and Acting Secretary Wolf:

As presidents and chancellors of several major research universities in New York State, we are writing to express our alarm over the growing difficulties our international students, faculty and scholars are facing in their efforts to secure visas for entry into the United States. The success of our institutions is founded in large measure on our ability to attract the greatest academic talent from around the globe. If we can no longer depend on a sustainable pipeline of such talent, our universities will face significant challenges to the fulfillment of our core mission, and our nation risks losing a critical cornerstone of economic growth.

In recent months these difficulties have become especially pronounced for our students from China. The visa delays experienced by our Chinese students have become so significant that many have been unable to arrive on campus in time to begin their fall term. In some cases, their scheduled consulate interviews have been pushed back months. And we have become further distressed following the President's May 29<sup>th</sup> [Proclamation](#) detailing additional visa restrictions for certain Chinese students, and by the subsequent State Department actions to enforce this directive through a variety of measures, including by revoking visas. The implications for the broader community of students, faculty and researchers from China remain unclear, contributing to our growing concern.

We therefore respectfully request that you consider taking the following steps to address these serious challenges:

- With regard to the President's Proclamation, we urge that it be applied to the explicit categories of students and researchers referenced in the text of the directive only, namely those immediately implicated under the PRC's "military-civil fusion strategy." For the vast majority of our students from China, this designation does not and should not apply.
- We urge the State Department to take the necessary measures to address the growing backlog of F-1 and J-1 visa applicants from China. While we were relieved to learn of the resumption of routine visa processing this summer, we see evidence that this is proceeding at a slower pace for U.S. Consulates located in China.

We recognize the challenges associated with our country's strategic relationship with China in this moment. Moreover, the pandemic, as well as ongoing national security concerns, have immeasurably complicated the traditional role of U.S. colleges and universities as international centers of scholarship and research. We recognize and share many of these concerns.

However, we also recognize the unique role that students and researchers from abroad have played in driving innovation and prosperity in the United States. In particular, consider, that Chinese students last year represented over a third of all international students in the U.S., and over 40 percent of all international students in New York alone—by far the largest nationality group among total international enrollments in the U.S. and New York respectively. Or that last year, students from China contributed just under \$15 billion to the national economy.<sup>1</sup>

It is our hope that our nation's policies may be informed by such considerations, particularly with regard to international students and their ability to contribute to our collective prosperity. For all of these reasons, we ask for your assistance in addressing the concerns outlined in this letter. We thank you for your attention and look forward to working with you in the future.

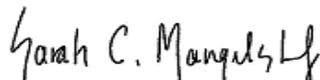
Sincerely,



Lee C. Bollinger  
President, **Columbia University**



Andrew D. Hamilton  
President, **New York University**



Sarah C. Mangelsdorf  
President and G. Robert Witmer, Jr.  
University Professor  
**University of Rochester**



Maurie McInnis  
President, **Stony Brook University**



Martha E. Pollack  
President, **Cornell University**



Satish K. Tripathi  
President, **University at Buffalo**

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<sup>1</sup> Open Doors/Institute of International Education, 2019 Fast Facts: [https://opendoorsdata.org/fast\\_facts/fast-facts-2019/](https://opendoorsdata.org/fast_facts/fast-facts-2019/); [https://opendoorsdata.org/fact\\_sheets/china/](https://opendoorsdata.org/fact_sheets/china/)