

Higher Education Access and Resources Vital to Immigrants

By Kyle Mahaney

ASCU is an unfailing advocate within the higher education community for the legal rights entitled to all, including immigrants. It's the mission of state colleges and universities to provide opportunities to all who are willing to work hard to be successful, and American higher education is also intellectually enriched by the presence of foreign-born faculty and international students.

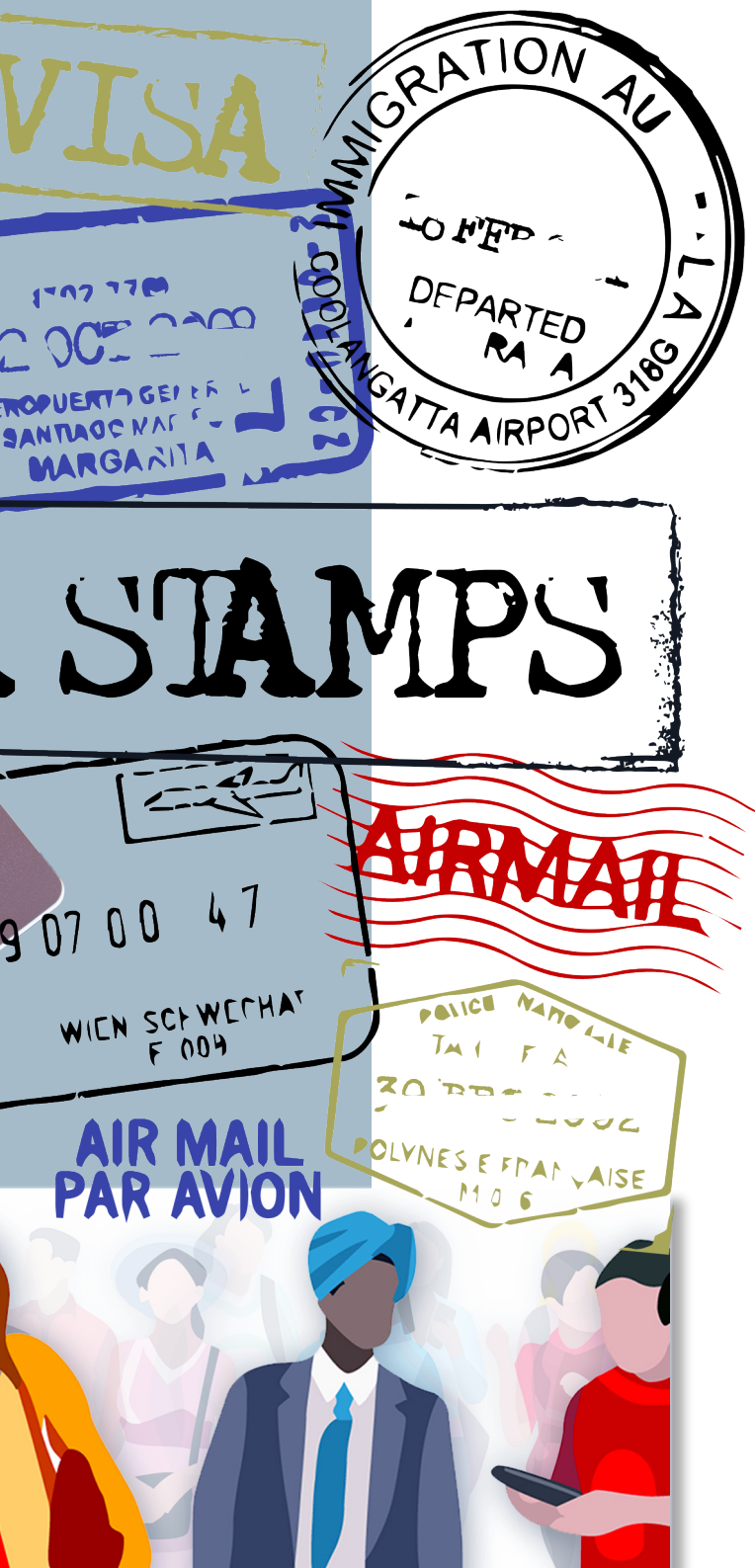
In a statement she made in June about the Supreme Court's upholding of the Trump administration's travel ban, AASCU President Mildred García highlighted how immigrant rights affect higher education and our nation.

"This decision will damage the nation's public institutions by restricting the free movement of qualified individuals," she wrote. "Worse yet, it undermines America's global standing as a beacon of openness and freedom to all people."

Research shows international students and immigrants contribute significantly to the U.S. economy. The over 1 million international students studying at U.S. colleges and universities contributed about \$37 billion to the U.S. economy and created 450,000 jobs during the 2016-2017 academic year, according to the National Association of Foreign Student Advisors. Additionally, immigrants paid over \$325 billion in combined taxes in 2014, research from the American Immigration Council states. These tax dollars are vital to state colleges and universities, which could not successfully perform their missions without adequate support from federal and state governments.

In terms of education, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients have made significant gains since the inception of the program, with 45 percent enrolled in higher education as of August 2017, according to the Center for American Progress. Ninety-four percent of those surveyed indicated they were only able to pursue their educational goals thanks to the DACA program.





While political leaders opposed to immigration have largely limited their attacks on education-related admittance to the realm of rhetoric, some policy changes have been made. Notably, a recent reversal of former president Obama's regulations will force foreign graduate students—specifically Chinese graduate students studying in some STEM disciplines—to re-apply annually for their student visas, reported *Science* magazine.

Unfortunately, emerging evidence shows that this general air of fear and uncertainty has caused a marked decline in the desirability of the United States as a destination for those interested in learning. Applications for F-1 student visas fell 17 percent between 2016 and 2017, according to the *ICEF Monitor*, and international enrollment decreased by 3 percent this year. The continuation of these trends would result in a tragic loss of the nation's status as the world's premier higher education destination.

However, there is federal and private funding that protects and promotes immigrant welfare on the many campuses served by AASCU and its Grants Resource Center (GRC). A short list of such support includes the following:

- › The **College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP)** remains active within the Department of Education, offering grants for campus services and financial aid directed at seasonal workers or their children participating in their first year of higher education. Central Washington University and Valdosta State University (Ga.) are current CAMP awardees. CAMP's companion program for high school completion is the Migrant Education High School Equivalency Program. Central Washington University and the University of North Georgia are current awardees.
- › The Department of the Treasury's **Low Income Taxpayer Clinics** "provide representation, education, and advocacy for low income and ESL taxpayers." Current awardees include North Carolina Central

University, University of Arkansas at Little Rock, University of Nevada Las Vegas and the University of the District of Columbia.

- › The **No Lost Generation Student Initiative** supports refugees through a network of campus-based chapters across the country. Chapters currently exist at East Carolina University (N.C.), Georgia Gwinnett College, Mississippi State University, San Diego State University and Western Kentucky University.
- › The Health Resources and Services Administration's **Service Area Competition** provides funds for "primary healthcare services to the nation's medically underserved populations." Migrant Health Centers are one of the funded subsections of the award.
- › Those interested in providing legal aid to the immigrant community might consider contacting the **Immigration Advocates Network**, which provides resources to promote best practices, communication and collaboration between advocates.

This list just scratches the surface of the strong, interwoven community of organizations out there who can support AASCU institutions as they help immigrants and international students. Reach out to GRC to explore more services, projects and partners. **P**

Kyle Mahaney is a program advisor with AASCU's Grants Resource Center (GRC).

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