



July 30, 2026

The Honorable David Barker
Assistant Secretary, Office of Postsecondary Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20202

RE: International Education Programs and Fulbright-Hays Program; Proposed Rescission of Regulations. Docket ID, ED-2026-OPE-0991

Dear Assistant Secretary Barker,

On behalf of the American Council on Education and the undersigned higher education associations, we write in opposition to the notice of proposed rulemaking rescinding the International Education Programs regulations and the Fulbright-Hays Program regulations. These programs are an important component in educating U.S. students and creating a workforce that can engage and compete on a global stage. However, administrative consistency and regulatory clarity are paramount to successfully running the international education programs within Title VI of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA) and Section 102(b)(6) of the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961. The proposal to completely rescind the current regulations, without a new regulatory replacement framework, would be a significant step backward that will harm both institutional compliance and national security.

While we appreciate administrative updates, stripping the codified regulatory baseline at the exact moment the program is being transitioned to the Department of State under an Interagency Agreement (IAA)¹ creates immense operational confusion, undermines a clear mandate established by Congress, and directly compromises essential programs designed to safeguard American national security. In addition, the Department of Education (ED) has launched new grant competitions to replace previously established and funded programs under Title VI and Fulbright-Hays 102(b)(6) programs; the Centers Aligned for Areas of National Need (CAANN), and Mutual Education and Cultural Exchange (MECE) programs.

It is critical to recognize that International Education Programs regulations and the Fulbright-Hays 102(b)(6) program regulations were created in response to a statutory responsibility set by Congress. Title VI international education programs were originally created in 1958 as part of the National Defense Education Act (NDEA). They were later reorganized and officially incorporated into Title VI of the HEA, which remains their authorizing legislation today. Fulbright-Hays programs are

¹ Department of Education/ Department of State interagency agreement (IAA) fact sheet: <https://www.ed.gov/media/document/fact-sheet-department-of-education-and-department-of-state-international-education-and-foreign-language-studies-partnership-112461.pdf>

authorized as part of the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961. By proposing a total rescission of the implementing regulations, the Department risks operating outside the boundaries intended by Congress. In order “to enable the Department to align such programs with current and evolving priorities and needs,” clarity on how to administer these programs must be maintained.²

A key component of the Department's mission is to “promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness.”³ The Department's Title VI and Fulbright-Hays programs support and partner with our educational institutions to ensure that students, graduates, and faculty are fully prepared to engage in a globalized world. They are our nation's foundational and most comprehensive programs for fulfilling our varied and critical global missions. Title VI programs support comprehensive capacity building through flagship programs, such as National Resource Centers (NRC), the Centers for International Business Education and Research (CIBER), and Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) fellowships, among other key programs. These grants are pivotal to international education and national security because they cultivate a necessary pipeline of regional experts within the U.S. and increase Americans' foreign language proficiency necessary for productive global relations. Notably, they sustain the study of less commonly taught languages such as Arabic, Mandarin, Russian, Hindi, and Farsi⁴ as well as the acquisition of specialized library collections in non-English languages. The U.S. intelligence community and defense agencies depend on the knowledge and training that these programs provide for American students.⁵ Title VI programs also equip students with the cross-cultural skills, contextual understanding, and language fluencies needed to navigate global marketplaces and international business environments, fortifying economic competitiveness. Realigning the Title VI and Fulbright-Hays programs to emphasize workforce readiness, national competitiveness, and returning education to the states is inconsistent with the statutory mission of these international education programs.

In conclusion, we are concerned that the proposed rescission of parts 655, 656, 657, 658, 660, 661, 662, 663, 664, and 669 of chapter VI of subtitle B of title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulations will be incredibly harmful to national security and removes the regulatory baseline of established programs codified by Congress. We urge the Department to reconsider this proposed rule and engage with stakeholders to update regulations regarding Title VI and Fulbright-Hays international education and training programs, especially for addressing current needed priorities. We look forward to working with you on these important issues.

² Federal Register, Proposed Rule on “International Education Programs and Fulbright-Hays Program; Recission of Regulations,” July 2026. <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2026/07/01/2026-13248/international-education-programs-and-fulbright-hays-program-recission-of-regulations>

³ Department of Education, Mission. <https://www.ed.gov/about/ed-overview/mission-of-the-us-department-of-education>

⁴ Congressional Research Service, Report on International Education Programs in the Higher Education Act, August 2020. <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R46508>

⁵ GAO, “Employment Information for Key Grant Programs that Foster Expertise in World Languages and Cultures,” April 2023. <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-23-105971>

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ted Mitchell".

Ted Mitchell
President

On behalf of:

ACPA-College Student Educators International
Alliance for International Exchange
American Association for Applied Linguistics
American Association of Colleges and Universities
American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers
American Association of State Colleges and Universities
American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges
American Council on Education
American Dental Education Association
Association of Community College Trustees
Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
Association of Research Libraries
Coalition for International Education
Council for Advancement and Support of Education
Council of Graduate Schools
EDUCAUSE
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities
NAFSA: Association of International Educators
National Association for College Admission Counseling
National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education
National Association of College and University Business Officers
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
Phi Beta Kappa Society
Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration