

# Congressional Meeting Talking Points

## Your Road Map for a Successful Meeting – Version 1.0

### **Before the Meeting:**

Decide among your group who will take which role (captain, storyteller, statistician, “ask-maker”, timekeeper, etc.)

### **1. Opening**

- a. Personal introductions—reference association with NAFSA;
  - 1) If more than 3 participants, have one captain make an introduction on behalf of the group
- b. Make personal connection with the staffer. Possible questions:
  - 1) Did you study abroad?
  - 2) Are you from the state/district?
- c. Reference the serious impact of COVID-19 on international education. Note you are here to discuss the ramifications and outline solutions, ever more urgent as the fall semester approaches.

### **2. International Students & Scholars – Talking Points & Data**

- a. International students, scholars, and their families bring SIGNIFICANT ACADEMIC, CULTURAL, and ECONOMIC BENEFITS to the United States.
- b. But the PANDEMIC, COMBINED WITH HARMFUL FEDERAL POLICY, has damaged our reputation as the premier destination for international students and scholars.
- c. The enrollment of new international students in the U.S. has declined for THE FOURTH STRAIGHT YEAR, DROPPING 43 PERCENT between Fall 2019 and Fall 2020.
- d. These DECLINES HAVE SERIOUS ECONOMIC RAMIFICATIONS:
  - International students contributed MORE THAN \$38 BILLION to our economy in 2019-20 academic year; but that figure is DOWN \$1.8 BILLION compared to the previous year.
  - International students and their families contribute significantly to our state/congressional district providing the local economy with [REFERENCE JOBS/ECON VALUE DATA FOR YOUR STATE OR DISTRICT]

### **3. International Students & Scholars – Stories**

- a. Tell the story that illustrates the EFFECTS of THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC and how VISA PROCESSING ISSUES and TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS are impacting international students and scholars and JEOPARDIZING THE FALL SEMESTER;
- b. Share how international students would benefit from the expansion of DUAL INTENT;
- c. Share how international students would benefit from a PATH TO A GREEN CARD.

### **4. International Students & Scholars – The “asks” [refer to the appropriate Issue Brief]**

- a. Support policies that REMOVE BARRIERS to international students and scholars studying, working, and living in the United States, specifically creating a DIRECT PATH TO GREEN CARD for international student graduates and expanding DUAL INTENT, so

- that we don't force these students, before they even start their studies, to say that they have no intention of staying and contributing to the United States after they graduate, and
- b. Direct the State Department to institute CLEAR AND TIMELY PROCESSING of student and scholar visas, and to WAIVE THE IN-PERSON INTERVIEW REQUIREMENT as much as possible.

## **5. Study Abroad – Talking Points & Data**

- a. Study abroad provides students the GLOBAL SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, and EXPERIENCES necessary to compete in today's global workforce.
- b. American students who study abroad are MORE LIKELY TO HAVE A HIGHER GPA and to COMPLETE THEIR DEGREE than students who do not.
- c. Eighty-six percent of American business leaders BELIEVE THEIR BUSINESS WOULD INCREASE if more staff had international experience.
- d. Despite these proven benefits, ONLY 10 PERCENT OF U.S. COLLEGE STUDENTS STUDY ABROAD BEFORE THEY GRADUATE.
- e. Yet the pandemic has dramatically impacted study abroad, limiting students' access to the associated benefits and resulting in SIGNIFICANT FINANCIAL LOSSES for institutions.
- f. Without additional financial and policy support, it COULD TAKE MANY YEARS FOR STUDY ABROAD TO FULLY RECOVER to pre-pandemic levels.

## **6. Study Abroad – Stories**

- a. Let me tell you about how COVID-19 is impacting study abroad on my campus.
- b. A federal study abroad grant would allow our institution/students to...
- c. Study abroad helps my students thrive in their studies and careers... A larger and more diverse number of students should have this opportunity...

## **7. Study Abroad – The Asks [refer to the appropriate Issue Brief]**

- a. New and increased funding for:
  - i. the State Department's IDEAS grant program to BUILD STUDY ABROAD CAPACITY on campuses;
  - ii. VIRTUAL STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMS, such as the Stevens Initiative
  - iii. The Department of Education's Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE) to SUPPORT INNOVATION IN STUDY ABROAD.
- b. COSPONSOR THE SENATOR PAUL SIMON STUDY ABROAD PROGRAM ACT, to grow study abroad participation, expand the diversity of participants, and increase diversity of destinations.

## **8. Thank You and Follow-Up**

- a. Thank the staffers for their time at the end of each meeting.
- b. Send a thank you email to the staffers as a follow-up message.
- c. Complete the online event evaluation and congressional meeting feedback form.