

NAFSA: Association of International Educators

**National Press Club Policy Forum on the
Role of Foreign Students in U.S. National Security and Foreign Policy**

July 14, 2003

Marlene Johnson: Welcome to all of you. I'm Marlene Johnson, Executive Director and CEO of NAFSA: Association of International Educators. NAFSA is the world's largest nonprofit association dedicated to international education and, as such, has been in the forefront on issues related to international student access in the United States. We believe that international education exchanges serve the U.S. national interest in fundamental ways, including building on the skills of Americans to work effectively in today's global environment, developing close ties with the leadership of other nations and supporting economic growth in less developed nations, as well as providing a foundation for addressing global problems.

Today I am pleased to serve as the moderator for this distinguished panel, gathered today to discuss the important topic of the role of international students in U.S. foreign policy and national security. We hope that this panel will serve to begin a much-needed national dialogue on the importance of continuing to welcome international students to our nation's colleges and universities.

In January of this year NAFSA released a major report of its strategic task force on international student access. The report was entitled "In America's Interest: Welcoming International Students." It is the result of lengthy deliberations by the task force, which was founded well before September 11 in response to the growing competition from other countries for the world's best and brightest international students. The task force was originally

scheduled to meet on September 12, 2001. Needless to say that meeting was postponed and the task force's work was strongly influenced by the September 11 terrorist attacks.

The report makes the case that at a time when efforts to counter terrorism have highlighted the importance of building ties and friendships around the world, the United States needs a comprehensive strategy to enhance the ability of legitimate international students to pursue educational opportunities here in the United States. You have a copy of the report and we invite you to take it with you and read it.

But today's panel is not here to discuss the report in detail but rather to bring different professional experiences and perspectives to bear on how foreign students contribute to our national interest. While this discussion marks the release of the strategic task force report, the discussion will not focus on the report itself, nor its recommendations, but on the underlying issues that address the serious issues that affect exchanges and to build ties between the United States and the rest of the world.

Our panelists today include three very distinguished individuals. First of all Lee Hamilton, who you know is currently the Director of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. He served for 34 years in the United States Congress from Indiana. And during that time he served as Chairman and Ranking Member of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs and most recently has been serving as a Vice Chairman of the National Commission on Terrorism Attacks upon the United States.

Doris Meissner is former [commissioner of the INS] at the U.S. Department of Justice from '93 to November of 2002. She is currently at the [Migration Policy] Institute and she is the only member of this panel who served on the Strategic Task Force. Judith Kipper is a Senior Fellow – Director actually - of the Middle East Forum at the Council on Foreign

Relations. She writes and speaks frequently on Middle East and international affairs and is a consultant on international affairs for ABC News. We will start this morning with Lee Hamilton and we'll go right down the panel. Vic Johnson who is our Associate Executive Director for Public Affairs at NAFSA will be here. He is the staff writer on the report and he will be here to respond to any specific questions on the report later during the Q&A.

Lee Hamilton: Good morning to all of you. Thank you very much Marlene for inviting me to participate this morning with my two good and distinguished colleagues, Doris and Judith. I want to say a word of appreciation to NAFSA for making this report today, for Marlene's leadership and Johnson's leadership. It's a pleasure for me to be here and to try to add my perspective to the importance of it.

I'm glad that Marlene said that we would not be commenting on the report. That's good because I only saw it a few minutes ago and I haven't read it yet, but I will. And I think some of the things I might say will blend with that report, at least as I get a quick glance at it. My point, of course, is that international education exchanges are an important national interest of the United States. These exchanges, I believe, are one of the most effective tools in the American foreign policy arsenal as we confront the challenges around the world, for several reasons.

One, they certainly erode mistrust; two, they enhance understanding and, three, they encourage reconciliation and dialogue among Americans and the people of the world. We've all seen these reports recently of how America stands in the eyes of the world and they're very troubling reports. Welcoming foreign students enables us to replace the walls of misunderstanding with reservoirs of goodwill.

I look upon these international exchanges as an enormously good opportunity for the United States to take the lead in educating the leaders of tomorrow. In spreading our fundamental values of democracy and rule of law, human rights, and all of the things this country stands for. They play a critical role for the United States across the world. I believe I'm correct in saying – Marlene would know better than I – that the United States is the number one destination for international students. And they come here for a very simple reason, at least as I understand it, and that is we simply have superior institutions of higher education in this country.

And these young, bright, brilliant, energetic young people from across the world want to come here to take advantage of the institutions of higher education that we have in this country. Coming here the students have many benefits. They enrich our schools and our campuses with diversity. The Supreme Court of the United States, just a few days ago, reminded us of the importance of diversity in our life and these students certainly bring it.

I have a granddaughter at Smith College. She lives in a dormitory now or a house with three or four - many other young women but three or four foreign students. And I have been impressed, over and over again in talking to Christina, with what an impact those students have had in her life. She's from Indiana – as you might expect – and how it has enriched the quality of her education at Smith College. These exchanges introduce American students to foreign cultures and languages and perspectives of the U.S. role in the world. They expose the international students to America with all of our strengths and some of our weaknesses and they get an understanding of what makes this country tick. It permits important collaborative effort in scientific and medical research.

I was speaking the other day with a chancellor of the UCLA campus and he was telling me about the importance to the science programs at UCLA of the students coming to that institution in physics and mathematics and computer sciences and all the rest. And he was saying that the brilliance and the energy of these students have just revitalized these departments of science at UCLA – that’s the importance that they play. And we should not overlook colleges compete for these people. They bring a lot of money into this country. The estimate I think is around \$12 billion. But you talk to any university administrator today and they will tell you the economic importance of having these students there are quite apart from the values otherwise.

It’s just essential that we Americans have a better appreciation of foreign cultures. We all know how poor we are at that as a country. This helps us and it is also essential that these students learn from us about the institutions which we value so highly here. And if we deny ourselves the brain power and the opportunity to improve ourselves because of their presence in our country then we lose an enormously important resource for our institutions in this country and for ourselves. I think maintaining and increasing – I would argue on the increasing side – the number of foreign students in the United States is just critical to America reaching its foreign policy goals in the years ahead. I look upon them as vital to the national security of the United States.

I can recall scores of times when attacking difficult challenges in American foreign policy, when the presence of foreign leaders who had been educated in this country – part educated in this country – the resolution of those problems were made somewhat easier. Maybe not easy, but somewhat easier because of their understanding of this country. You know the most prominent names – Kofi Annan, President Fox in Mexico, King Abdullah.

They're all world leaders and there are many, many more who have benefited from their experience here of studying in the United States. I think China sends the largest number of students. Marlene, am I right about that?

Marlene Johnson. And India.

Lee Hamilton: And India – 60,000 young Chinese students coming to the United States is the figure I have, studying in American colleges and universities. At the highest – I guess along with India – of any country. Their experience just has to improve this most difficult bilateral relationship that we have in this country – the U.S.-China relationship over a period of time. And they have to serve as a force of understanding and a force of reform within China itself. By contrast, look at the number of students we have in this country from Russia.

I don't know the number but it's very, very small for a country of Russia's size and importance, its generally well-educated population. And the problems that they have in that country – we're working in some of these at the Wilson Center – on their institutions of higher education.

And then you take a country like Iran, where we have some very difficult issues between the two nations. But anybody who looks at that problem suggests that one of the solutions is to try to increase the unofficial or nonofficial contacts between our two countries.

There are thousands of Iranian students in this country today, and I look upon them as a bridge between the United States and Iran in dealing with some of the critical problems as we try to advance that dialogue with that country.

I think that foreign students in the wake of 9/11 . . . all of us are deeply concerned, of course, about the security questions. And I think the need is to try to draw a balance between having what we pride ourselves on having -- an open society on the one hand that encourages

students and scholars, tourist and commerce in this country -- and to balance that with the need to protect ourselves against terrorist attack. I don't suggest for a moment that that's an easy thing to achieve.

But I clearly have the impression that we are closing our doors to many foreign students and scholars because of the arduous screening process. Doris will know more about that than I do. Particularly is that true in the Islamic world, and if there's any area where we need better understanding between two groups it's our understanding in these countries of the Islamic world. Muslim male students especially, coming into this country, have dropped precipitously in number.

I don't have any hard statistics on that. I understand they're being gathered, but we do have some statistics on tourism. And there we've had a sharp drop-off of about 20% since 9/11 and that, incidentally, is a cost of about \$15 billion to the United States. We will be getting those statistics on the students very soon, maybe some already have them. But my hunch is that we are already beginning to pay a price. I know we are paying a price in scholarly exchanges because we confront this at the Wilson Center regularly, trying to get people we want as resource people to come into our country. We're having more and more difficulty getting them here because of our restrictions.

I think we must be careful not to adopt excessively burdensome or restrictive policies that deter foreign students from studying in American schools. These students make up about 2% of the foreign visitors to our country. They're easier, as I think the report points out, to monitor than other groups. And we must begin to look, I think, in this country at international educational exchange as a solution to terrorism and not part of the problem.

There is, indeed, a crisis of communication between the United States and the Islamic world. It's been growing, and welcoming foreign students to engage in a dialogue of civilizations rather than a clash of civilizations makes more sense.

We have to be alert obviously to the security problems. We do not want to become a fortress American, however. And we have to become better and more efficient and, in my judgment, we'll have to put more resources into screening and monitoring the students here.

Let me conclude. We have a very proud tradition in this country of openness to foreign students. The benefits of that are clear, I hope, I believe to all of you and I would say they are immeasurable benefits. Now is the time for us to seize the opportunity to teach democracy, to teach human rights, to teach the rule of law and the equality of each man and woman and all of our children. These are the lessons that are the best legacy that the United States can offer to future generations. International education exchanges are a vital element of U.S. foreign policy. It cannot be allowed, this program, to fall victim to our new fears. Instead it should be used to overcome those fears. Thank you. [applause]

Doris Meissner: Thank you very much and good morning. The starting point for me in talking about immigration number [inaudible]. . . role that the immigration system plays in this topic that we have this morning is to say that, as we all know, the September 11 terrorists were foreign visitors. They were here with validly issued visas, including student visas. And so it was inevitable that in the national response to September 11 there would be efforts made to tighten immigration controls.

It's not more than . . . it's almost two years, it's more than a year and a half after that terrible day. And so it's valid to ask the question: what about those immigration responses and what can we say about the tightened immigration controls that have been put into place on a

widened number of fronts, including the access of foreign students and international visitors to this country? Well, that's a question that I and some colleagues have been looking at very intensively over the course of about 18 months. We have just published our research a week or two ago. There's a copy of the summary of the work available on the table for you if you'd like it.

And what I'd like to do with my time this morning is just sketch very briefly where we come out on that question and, particularly, where we come out on the question vis-à-vis international education and foreign student international study in this country.

We looked at all of the major changes. New measures and programs that the government put into place and those, of course, included some very high visibility activities, which you all know about – the arrest and detention of thousands of non-citizens in this country; voluntary interviews have always focused on college campuses; a special registration program; very much more stringent visa measures. And almost all of those things targeted solely at Arab and Muslim communities and at young males, non-citizens from countries near and around the Middle East.

Looking at all of that what we found is really not surprising. What we found is that the government has fundamentally failed in this broad panoply of measures to do anything significant that makes us safer from terrorism. And the reason for that is that the critical failing conceptually has been the idea that if you treat and if you use immigration and immigration enforcement through blanket measures, targeting them at particular communities, that that somehow is synonymous with combating terrorism or with effective counter-terrorism. The two simply are not the same thing.

The successes that we had as a country in responding to terrorism has come from broad-based international initiatives, including war. They've come from very intensively stepped-up law enforcement cooperation, particularly international law enforcement cooperation. In the immigration arena or finding terrorists in this country they've come from, in particular, from information being from arrests made abroad and the intelligence work that has been done in response to that.

In contrast to those areas from where there have been some successes, what you find is that in these immigration measures that the government has taken there has been not one single terrorism charge brought against any of the thousands of people who have been arrested or inconvenienced or registered or subject to these very intrusive admissions procedures or recite [phonetic] procedures. And in addition to the fact that there has been not one single terrorism-related arrest, there has been enormous harm where civil liberties in this country are concerned and to the quality of the country, something that we call our sense of national unity. It's really our character as a nation, our sense of ourselves as a nation that is diverse and among whose greatest positive attributes is the diversity that we represent.

On that particular point, that national unity point, one of the things that we did to delve into that area was a substantial amount of interviewing around the country in Arab and Muslim American communities. And what we found was, of course, an enormous sense of being stigmatized in those communities, and these communities are heavily populated by American citizens. We're talking about communities that are American citizens, also visitors and permanent residents, etc., but the entire mixture. However, a great sense of these people feeling stigmatized based on their nationality, based on their country of origin. But in addition to that, something that surprised us very much that I think is very important here for this subject

today, and that is a substantial echo effect internationally from these immigration measures that have been taken in this country.

And that echo effect is one that is basically telling people around the world, particularly people in countries of the Middle East, that Arab and Muslim Americans are being treated differently. It's a measure of hypocrisy on the part of the United States vis-à-vis our stated values and the principles that we believe we try to live by. So that what we have is a set of very rigorous and aggressive domestic policy actions that are, in fact, tapping into a very different foreign policy effect and are adding to the resentment of the United States that many countries around the world feel and that contribute to ripe conditions for recruitment of radical young people and people who are likely to contribute to the hostility that we feel and presumably are trying to curtail. So that in the name of buttressing our national security, in fact, we may very well, through these immigration measures, be fueling the forces of terrorism abroad.

Well, do immigration laws need to be implemented in this way? They do not. There is an enormous amount of discretion, there is an enormous amount of choice that the government can make in how it uses immigration and how it connects immigration with the war on terrorism. I'm not going to talk about all of the things that I think we should be doing and things that we shouldn't be doing. But let me just pick out a couple of highlights that are relevant to this subject.

It is very clear that immigration measures overall are far too blunt a tool to be effective per se in the war against terrorism. Immigration is only as good as the specific information that is available in the systems to identify particular people who may be bad people or may have bad intentions. What needs to happen is that there needs to be a far heavier focus than we've

seen so far on the questions of information and intelligence, on the ways in which the intelligence system and the immigration system work together rather than the immigration system simply being left to its own. And obviously an enormous amount of effort in the sharing of information among agencies – those very unsexy, difficult tedious kinds of things that, in fact, over the long term will make a difference but are not getting the attention that they deserve.

I'll give you an example here, where information and intelligence is concerned in the foreign student realm and that is foreign student information and tracking, which has been an issue that's been around for some while but has gotten renewed impetus since September 11. Some people really object to the idea of tracking the foreign students in any more specific or intensive ways than other non-citizens that are here. I'm not one of those people. I think it's perfectly legitimate to have comprehensive information on people who are here studying. The reason that I think so is that even though it's a fairly small percentage of the numbers of people who are here as non-citizens, they are here for a very long period of time typically. The visas are multi-year visas. And often their study is in a field that can be sensitive to national security – medicine, sciences and so on, so there is a reason for tracking of foreign students. But it needs to be done in a way where the government and our institutions of higher education are, in fact, working together as partners. This is not a we-they, kind of a thing.

Schools, sort of in exchange or as part of the implicit contract of providing international education, which is an enormous asset that we have as a country, can be partners with the government in doing this. But it has to be done properly, it has to be done with a lot more attention and resources and a lot more common sense than is being devoted to it. We're now tracking for every single teeny iota of information possible, which is not creating the

information that is necessary to connect properly with national security. It's just a blizzard of data.

So that those kinds of information activities and partnerships with institutions in society that are extensions of what our national interests are, are the kinds of ways in which immigration ought to be used. But in addition to that, the kinds of things that Lee Hamilton was talking about – the overall access of people around the world to cultural exchange, international exchange, and study in the United States has to be embraced.

We should be taking on the admission of foreign students as a national project. It ought to be a positive attribute and element of a comprehensive, long-term foreign policy to combat terrorism. So that a policy of engagement, which actually recognizes the comparative advantage that higher education in this country represents for us as a nation is what we ought to be seeing rather than what it is that we're seeing. We're alienating instead of embracing.

I would say that foreign student programs are a key element of the soft power strategies that we all know are central to our long-term foreign policy interests around the world. And I can assure you that our immigration laws can be administered in ways that would support those long-term interests. Thank you. [applause]

Judith Kipper: Good morning, it's a pleasure to be here. I started out my career as an educator, so it's nice to come back to these sorts of things. What we're really talking about today is one of the factors in globalization. During the 1990s we in the United States were fat and rich and satisfied and we didn't have any enemies and the Cold War was over and the economy was booming. And then suddenly the event that defines our foreign policy and domestic policy today – 9/11 – happened. That was globalization smacking us in the face. It happened to us. It changed this country. It changed other people because if the U.S. is

vulnerable, everybody is vulnerable. But the United States was not able to go after the bad guys by itself. To this day, the United States has to cooperate with all of the countries that we can possibly get to cooperate around the world to find the money flows, the [inaudible], the cells, the weapons, and all of the other things that are necessary.

The same is true of a lot of other things. And we cannot do anything by ourselves anymore. All of the threats today to the United States, external threats, or what we can call transnational threats, the U.S. doesn't have to be afraid of any invasion or conventional warfare. It's just not going to happen, but we do have to be afraid of a lot of transnational threats, including terrorism, including weapons of mass destruction, SARS, AIDS, global warming, immigration issues here on this side and there – freedom of the seas, skies, the ability to travel, etc., etc. And you all can probably think of hundreds more. So for the United States, our institutions are built for alliance relationships and bilateral relationships, they're not built for a messy globalized world. And we are going to need to change our institutions, including the Department of State and the White House and the intelligence agency.

The need for exchange in both directions, in my view, is a crucial, critical, vital interest of the United States of America. One of the most serious problems the government and our people have, in understanding other cultures, is lack of language. Today, one of the catastrophes for our soldiers in Iraq is that they don't have enough translators – they simply don't have people that speak the language and know the culture.

Some of you may remember after 9/11 when they started that little thing at the bottom of the cable TV stations, that there was this message – if you had been a citizen for three years, call 1/800-something if you speak Farsi or you speak Arabic. How appalling if the United States government didn't have (a) enough translators to begin with, make it a priority of it and

(b) that that was the only way Uncle Sam knew how to find interpreters. I'd know how to find them other places – at universities, embassies, lots of other places to find them. So we're in trouble on both sides. And the exchange question is absolutely vital. We need students coming here as much as possible and not to be afraid.

I have heard three or four appalling stories about French students being dis-invited from coming to high schools in New England and other places and coming to other art schools and other places because the principal or the head of the school or the board of the whoever it was – the guys with the money – said we couldn't be sure how you will be treated. That's not acceptable in America. What is acceptable in America is to go after more French students. And you, whoever is objecting, have the responsibility to make sure that if there are any unpleasant attitudes or actions against any student of another country that that stops -- that that is understood in our society as unacceptable.

I'm a child of immigrants, as a child I felt it. And I'm very sensitive to that. And I think that in a country such as ours, where we are all foreigners – everybody comes from some place – we have to do a better job in welcoming our foreign students and making them feel at home. But we also have to do a better job and that has to start at the very top of our society. To get our own people to study language, to go abroad, to be curious, to find out and not to simply shut down and we're the great big wonderful America and we don't need to know anything about anybody else. Well, you really do. The fastest growing religion in America is Islam, among Americans - not foreigners, Americans. So we need to know something about Islam. We need to know something about other cultures because, as Congressman Hamilton was saying – at UCLA, my alma mater, by the way – there are hundreds of thousands of students coming now from Asia. In the early part of the century they came from Europe. In

another part of the century . . . in the future, they'll come from I don't know where – Africa and all other kinds of places. And it constantly renews our society.

We are going to have to, as Americans, live in the world. Doris said something about soft issue – I don't think it's a soft issue. All the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't put Humpty-Dumpty together again. Today, culture, language, education, understanding, accepting the notion – not better, not worse, we're simply different. That other cultures are as good as ours but they're different. And if you pick up the cultural cues, you'll be perfectly welcome in that culture and be able to appreciate the things you like and you don't have to like the things you don't like. We have to live in the world.

And one of the ways for us to live in the world is to have exchanges, to bring as many foreign students here as possible and to have as many students going abroad. I remember that the Quakers – I think they still do it – the American Friends Service Committee, they bring young people, much younger than college. They bring them in high school and they put them with an American family. Why shouldn't that be a national priority? That every American family who can afford it and has a couple of kids at home and would like to have a unique experience brings a kid from another culture and another country for a semester, for a year, whatever. How that would change us. How that would enlighten us. How that would get rid of our fear.

We in America are afraid, not because we're threatened, we are afraid because we don't understand the world in which we live. We are ignorant. We don't understand other people's culture, language, way of eating, food, dressing, whatever it may be. And it's absolutely vital to living in the globalized world for us to do so.

We can't close the doors or build a fence – we just can't. Because this is it – globalization is here, whether we like it or not. Maybe some of you will remember in the '90s when we used to talk about globalization. Oh, what's going to happen when the Europeans get the euro. They don't like each other, how are they going to possibly deal with it. Ha-ha.

How is the Third World, Africa or some poverty-stricken countries in Asia going to deal when they start getting computers in school? What will that mean? How will that impact on sustainable development? Nobody bothered to start a public policy debate about how globalization is going to impact on the United States, and we get it in the face with 9/11. And since 9/11, we've drawn the wagons around. We're scared. We don't let people in. We humiliate them in airports and little by little, it's not those foreigners – they're humiliated and they feel bad – but it's our civil liberties that are being eroded in the process. It is American civil liberties that are being eroded if we allow others to be treated in this way.

We've got to check up on people. I'm with Doris – I think we ought to track foreign students. There's nothing wrong with that. If there's an emergency and their family calls, you have to know where to find them. We track young men in case we need the draft in this country – American boys over 18 - so there's nothing wrong with that. But we do need to protect the way people are treated in this country. This is not a soft issue; this is not a soft issue. Our country is based on a free and good and decent education system. I wouldn't be here today without free education. UCLA is a state school and it cost hardly anything when I went there.

We have to have decent education and it has to be free and available to everybody and that means foreigners as well because we have to live in the world. Our economy, our future, science, the environment, space, weapons, computers – you name it – there is nothing you can

name that doesn't depend on interdependency, on the global world, on transnational, multilateral approaches.

The last thing I'm going to say is about anti-Americanism. Well, we discovered Islam with Ayatollah [Khomeini](#) as a sinister force to undermine the Western way of life, which, of course, it isn't but we were so very ignorant. And then we discovered anti-Americanism after 9/11 – how come they hate us so much? Well, let's say 80% of the anti-Americanism is because we're huge, we're dominant, we're noisy, we're young, we're ever-present and a lot of people are dependent on us and nobody likes that. Let's say that explains 80% of it, but I think that there's at least 20% that we need to examine. Why are the recipients of what we call our foreign policy and defense policy so angry and hating us so much? What is it that we are communicating that is increasing the negative feelings towards us instead of the good feelings? Because I know for every American in this room and I know many in this room are not American, we absolutely are convinced that we project a policy based on our values and good intentions because that's who we are. We don't want to conquer anybody. We like everybody to drive a SUV and be rich and to go to McDonald's and have a Cineplex and all of those things. But something is happening out there that people do not perceive that we are projecting policy based on our values and good intentions and that needs to be examined. That needs to be examined at a national level because something is wrong about the way we are communicating with the rest of the world. It's not all our fault. No, everybody has to take responsibility for themselves but there is a certain portion about the way we are communicating. And, of course, the more exchanges we have at the earliest age the better off we are going to be because, like a language, it opens the brain cells – like music, like mathematics and so on. We have a huge job in front of us. And for our own country, if we

don't fix our public education system, we're going to find ourselves in real, real trouble in a couple of decades. And maybe one of the ways to fix it is to bring lots of foreigners in to challenge, to teach us and for us to benefit from the differences in our cultures. [applause]

Marlene Johnson: We have some time for questions. The panelists may either respond here, in which case, use the microphone or you can come up here whichever. Identify who you would like the question to go to.

Question: I'm Bob Pastor. I'm Vice President of International Affairs at American University. I want to congratulate you and Marlene and Vic and NAFSA for this tremendously important report that identifies very clearly how central this is to our national interest. At American University we just did a similar university-wide report and decided to rededicate ourselves, redouble our efforts to send students abroad, bring students back, change the way we're teaching internationally but we found a problem. And the problem is not only that the government is not helping, but for reasons outlined in your report, the government is impeding our ability to internationalize. Therefore, the question I'd like to ask the panel, specifically Doris to start, and then perhaps Vic and Lee as well, to comment on is the next stage. What should be our efforts? NAFSA efforts as well as university efforts on Capitol Hill to change the immigration laws so as to make it or change immigration policies so as to make it much easier for students to come from abroad, both on short term as well as on long-term basis? To change the way in which the tracking system works, not only to permit a better partnership between the U.S. government and the universities, but more importantly, within the U.S. government because that's not working at all – between the Department of Education and the State Department? So if you could lay out for us the legislative agenda, we could all get behind NAFSA for doing that?

Doris Meissner: Short question, short answer, right? Well, what you're talking about, Bob, is a whole different state of mind. And I think you're right in saying what should we do with the Congress because it seems to me that it may well be that this is something that needs to come from the legislative branch. I think actually that NAFSA's report does a very good job in laying out how the foreign student work that we do is just completely split up. There's no real foreign student policy. There is no effort or overall conceptual framework within which the various pieces – State, INS, Department of Education, maybe others but those are the principal actors, even the Commerce Department is involved to an extent but, hey, they all run their own programs. And so one of the critical things that has to happen is that there does need to be an overall policy, an Executive Branch policy, that foreign student education is good and here's how we're going to do it. But I think that's much less likely to come from within the Executive Branch at this point than it is if it comes from a more public discussion and hearings, etc.

If I were a political strategist, I think I might start with the current visa policy that is supposed to go into effect on August 1. This idea of interviewing around the world 90% of people who come here for visas, without any differences among countries or any differences among categories of visitors will . . . well, there was a hearing on this last week and I think the quote was a recipe for disaster. I don't see it as anything short of that and foreign students will be particularly hurt by that because there's just no predictability at this point for how long it takes to get through this visa process. More and more . . . even last year, we heard stories of students never arriving in time for the fall semester. And with these kinds of changes I think that that will be increased this semester. Unfortunately, I think one has to start with just preventing even more deleterious activities from going into place, which is not to say that there

shouldn't be careful visa oversight. But, again, it's not a one-size-fits-all proposition. And maybe Lee Hamilton has some suggestions on who friendly interlocutors would be. But I think at this point the temperature level and the decibel level has to be increased in order to start to get attention to the issue.

Lee Hamilton: Your comments, of course, as usual, very well taken. I had several very quick thoughts about it. One, it's not unusual to see the pendulum swing here with regard to this question. We had this traumatic experience on 9/11 that everybody puts uppermost in their minds – security, security, security. The security people win every argument in this city over the past few months. It's very hard to argue against because we all want to be secure. But you are beginning now to see the pendulum swing. The very fact we're having this meeting today is one instance of that, but there are others.

The Congress, which I think has been unusually passive on this question of civil liberties in general, is beginning to stir itself. The courts are beginning to stir themselves and all of these things are indications that we are beginning to think again about the broad question of civil liberties, so the pendulum swinging is one point. The second point would be on the legislative – we don't have the opportunity here today to talk about how to influence legislative - in the [inaudible] perhaps. But there isn't any doubt that you have to support your friends. You have a lot of friends on the Hill on this issue and you've got to let them know with information. This is a good start right here, get this into the hands of every member of the United States Congress and to the thousands of people in the Executive Branch so that they can see the importance of international education.

But by supporting friends, let me just point out, that there are a lot of groups in this country that would be very sympathetic to what we're saying here today – not everybody

would be – but there are a lot of groups. Your constituency, your higher education community is critically important here. The higher education community has to come into Washington and say, “Look, this is important to the vitality of our institutions here.” And the higher education community is highly organized, it’s highly respected. It has a lot of clout on Capitol Hill and in the Executive Branch and now is the time you’ve got to play hard ball.

Now, the specifics of what you say is important and I’m not all that qualified, frankly, to tell you what those specifics should be. But the message has to be coherent, it has to be clear, it has to be specific with regard to the kind of legislative proposals that you think will advance your case. You cannot come to the Congress and give them a list of 50 things that need to be done. You’ve got to give them a list of two or three things that need to be done. And every university president, not just those from the Midwest, but all of them have to say the same thing, I believe. And among those messages, I think, you’re going to have to have more resources to put into this if you’re going to monitor these students as everybody says we should monitor them. That takes time, it takes effort, it take skilled people to do it so you’re going to have to argue for more resources here as well. I’m not pessimistic about this incidentally. I think the pendulum will swing back. I’m delighted to see a group like this speaking up and coming forward because I think it indicates that we are getting interested in some very vital things.

Incidentally, don’t forget the tourist industry either. Here’s a case where you link the higher education community with the tourist industry, which is a huge industry in this country, with a lot of clout, with a lot of force, with a lot of money behind it. And they can be a big factor here if you join hands. Look for allies here, there are a lot of them out there and make that message strong.

Excuse me here – I'm on a seminar here. It is not just a question of legislation. It probably even more a question of implementation of how these things are carried out in the bureaucracy, so you've got to keep your eye on both. They interact with each other as you move through the process. But just don't go to the Congress for relief, but go to the people at the State and the Immigration Service and people who are issuing visas and all the rest of them and make the case for a . . . I think Doris talked about a common sense implementation of your programming. That's what you really need here. Don't put all the blame on the Congress, folks, let's put a little blame on the United States Executive Branch as well.

Marlene Johnson: I have one question back here and then here.

Question: I do a great deal of traveling and I just want to emphasize that the problem is not just the Arab world it is all over. When I was in Australia in May there was a Fulbright Commission staff member who spent the whole weekend writing letters on visas for August, and having to let every university know that the students might not get there until September or October, which I found utterly amazing.

I got an earful in Turkey from an international leadership institute, as you can well imagine. And here in Washington, there was a world archeology congress, and fifteen to twenty of their invited speakers were not given visas; and not just from the Arab world, but from India, from Nigeria, one even from England. One was given finally, an interview for their visa three weeks after the congress was over. So this is a real problem.

Marlene Johnson: Okay, are you a member of the press? Great, go ahead.

Question: I'm Brian Wingfield with the New York Times. The panel has talked a lot about exchange today and dialogue. After 9/11 it seems like the first thing that the United States did is we looked at immigration policies and turn around and say how do we bring more

people here so that they can understand us because people clearly are not understanding us. But the problem is that it seems that we're not understanding them. And I think if we talk to most international students they're not going to say, we want to go to America to learn more about American culture but we also want Americans to learn about our culture. So, in going forward, how do we bridge that gap? How do we learn more about what other cultures are doing? Are we doing anything to promote exchanges abroad as well as here?

Judith Kipper: That's obviously a key question is that we take some of the responsibility for educating ourselves and that we begin to know other cultures, languages, and the way other people operate, think and behave. The State Department and lots of other places – there are all kinds of other offices now in the White House and the State Department for democratization. The Secretary of State started for the Middle East – the Middle East initiative – and those will be exchanges from there coming to learn about democratic processes, but in the process, obviously, as they go around the country and talk to local councils, cities, legislatures, universities hopefully there will be a learning curve. But we also need a program for the United States, for our bureaucrats, for the press, for teachers, for everyone in a responsible position to learn about the world in which we live because we have to live in the world. We are in the process right now, in a transition from the Cold War, the bipolar world, to a different kind of world and we are learning how to be a super power and so far we have things but there is a lot more that we need to learn.

And, as I said a moment ago, I think the leadership has to come from the top. I think the White House, the President, the leadership in the Congress has to make it a priority that we adhere to our values of tolerance, of openness and that requires us to understand other people.

Lee Hamilton: I think the question is a very good one and one that we should pick up on and emphasize. Not only are we interested in bringing foreign students, but we're interested in – at least I'm interested – in sending American students abroad. But it's not just American students going abroad, now that's an important element of it. But, my goodness, I want Indiana farmers going abroad. I want engineers going abroad. I want teachers going abroad. I want not just the official diplomats and government people, not just members of Congress in the Executive Branch, but a critical part of American foreign policy is the non-official part of American policy in a sense. It's all part of it.

And maybe we've been too narrowly focused here this morning on students – we want exchanges promoted of all kinds and directions. Now you say, Hamilton, that's no big deal. Everybody agrees with that. Everybody doesn't agree with that. Because you just watch the policies of the United States government over a period of decades and we have a number of countries we rule off limits and we don't send people to and we don't want people to go to. I think the experience is that engagement of people – Americans going abroad and foreigners coming into the United States benefits all of us and that's what we want to promote. But don't for a minute think that American foreign policy always encourages exchanges because it does not.

Judith Kipper: Let me add a sentence to what Lee Hamilton has said. In the last 10 years I visited Vietnam, Hanoi, Cuba and Iran and ironically there is no anti-Americanism there. All they want to do is have good relations with us and have exchanges and, if we would only open up to them, their lives would be better.

Marlene Johnson: Any other questions here? Yes?

Question: Can we broaden the discussion beyond students? Several of you are involved far more broadly than students. I'm Irv Chapman with Bloomberg Radio. We see something every day about people being denied entry into the United States, somebody who wants to go to a daughter's wedding, tourists have been mentioned, the industry is dying for foreign tourists. All kinds of people who used to come into the United States are now being delayed or denied, because delay equals denial. Could you broaden the discussion a little bit and go into the damage that that is doing?

Lee Hamilton: I cited in my talk, one damage is just in the tourist industry we're losing billions and billions of dollars in this country because tourists are not coming to the United States in the way that they on did, so that's an economic detriment right there. But, of course, there are a lot of others. When foreigners are not coming in here we miss the interaction that takes place in many, many areas – not necessarily related to government. I think one of the things that we need to understand better is how much these people enrich the life of this country when they come in.

We cannot function in many parts of our economy today without foreigners. I was out in California not long ago and they were telling me that they literally can not run those high tech businesses out there without Indian mathematicians and physicists. I had a hospital in Indiana call me up the other day and tell me their experience with regard to computers. They were looking all over America to find someone who could correct the glitches in their computer system. They couldn't find it. They finally made a contact with an Indian ...who solved the problem by telephone. And now, instead of consulting with New York or San Francisco or wherever, they call up New Delhi to solve the computer system problem in the Bartholomew County Hospital in Indiana. These are the kinds of things we have to understand.

Judith made this point very strongly throughout – I’m not sure this is in response to your question -- but it is a much, much broader matter than just students.

Judith Kipper: And we invite people – come for tourism, come for school, come for this, come for that. It’s like inviting somebody to your house and not letting them in the door, and that creates life-long resentment that parents put to their children, children put to their sisters and brothers and so on. And it does not serve the national interest.

Marlene Johnson: We’ll take one more question from the press and then we have to close this down. They can be available for a few minutes afterwards.

Question: My name is Andy Mollison. I’m from Cox Newspapers. And I actually have two questions. Maybe if you can only take one, choose it. One is, wasn’t this report actually finished months ago?

Marlene Johnson: Yes

Andy Mollison: So are you reissuing it? A report that was from January?

Marlene Johnson: No, we’re using this as a forum to get the perspectives of these individuals on the importance of the recommendations of the report.

Question: The other thing I wondered was what do you say to the people who say that one of the reasons this monitoring system and so on is so screwed up is that the universities and colleges fought tooth and nail for years against implementing the SEVIS system that was going to help track foreign students, and they’re now reaping what they sowed?

Doris Meissner: I’ll let Vic respond as well if you like. Having been there during some of that period, what I would say is two things -- that the universities and the government were actually working very constructively on how you put a system like this together. At the same time, there was disagreement about elements of the legislation that were completely impractical

that had to do with how you collect a fee in order to finance it. One of the problems with these things is that we, in this case, Congress in the mid-'90s, mandated things that were not funded. And so you have these enormously expensive difficult requirements without any funding and that is not the best way to build a viable program that presumably has a broad national interest involved in it.

But to the extent that there was disagreement, that was over with on 9/11 and we've now have quite a while since in which everybody understands what's critical and what needs to be done. And there still isn't, in my opinion, the kind of focus and the kind of support – both in terms of resources and in terms of leadership commitment that is required to do this properly as compared with lots of high profile, high visibility activities that the government has pursued very much at the expense of certain nationality groups in this country. That is misplaced effort.

Marlene Johnson: One quick question – we have to leave this room shortly.

Question: I'm a freelance journalist, I specialize in foreign students. I have a doctorate in international education. I've been very involved with foreign students all my life, married to one, all my friends are. Everything you guys say is absolutely right on, they're extremely important. However, I'm just devastatingly disappointed that you guys don't get to the problems, and unless you get to the problem with the foreign student visa . . . you guys should be part of the solution not part of the problem. And there's two huge problems with the foreign student visa right now...

Marlene Johnson: Do you have a question?

Question: I would like a response on this. One of them is about the trade schools, you don't even talk about that. There are thousands of trade schools, manicuring schools, hair dresser schools, they all give out the I-20 visa. These students are not students that are going to

be leaders of the world. We concentrate on the higher end of education, but the other post-secondary educational institutions are also getting the foreign student visa. And this is where a lot of students are coming in, and here's the second problem, with no intention of going home. Many, many so-called foreign students are coming here with the intention of immigrating and they're using the foreign student visa, which is a non-immigration visa. You assume they all go home, the whole basis of the foreign student visa is to go home, and do all the things you did. Especially Doris, I wish you would address this overstaying thing, this not going home. More than 50% of the students... of a million students who have foreign student visas [inaudible]

Marlene Johnson: Okay, let's give her a chance to respond.

Doris Meissner: I don't think any of us would champion improper visa procedures or improper uses of this visa or any other visa. I think what we're talking about is focusing on the ways in which these activities should be done that do, indeed, serve our national interests and that are a critical part of international security. And that means really giving it both the policy support as well as the resources that the overall activity requires so that, in fact, it does meet its promises and not throwing the baby out with the bath water.

The implication of your question is that because there is some misuse the whole category is somehow flawed and that's not true. It has to be done right.

Marlene Johnson: Okay, thank you, are there any other questions?

Question: Al Milliken with Washington independent writers. Did any of you look seriously at the student lives and educational success in the United States of the 9/11 murder-terrorists? Did they encounter any problems or restrictions in practicing their belief system or

was their professed Islamic religion and morality properly respected and tolerated, if not honored, at the schools that they attended?

Doris Meissner: Well, just having done, as I said, a considerable amount of research on these issues, I think it's an unanswerable question. These people are no longer here and that's not what we need to know about them.

Marlene Johnson: Okay, well, thank you all very much for joining us today. And if you have other questions for the panelists, you're welcome to come up here. [applause]

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]