

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT INCLUSION AND SUCCESS: Public Attitudes, Policy Imperatives, and Practical Strategies

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INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly interconnected world, the value of international students' presence and participation in higher education has gained wide recognition at the institutional, national, and global levels. ACE has long been active in advocating for and promoting international student inclusion and success through both our policy and programmatic work. Declining international student numbers in the United States—an emerging trend for the last few years that accelerated during the pandemic—have spurred significant concern among higher education leaders and, in turn, prompted ACE to ramp up even further our work on international student issues.

To inform our own practice and that of our member institutions, with support from the Charles Koch Foundation, ACE partnered with the Winston Group to survey U.S. voters on their attitudes and perceptions regarding international students. Three iterations of the survey were administered in March 2017, December 2019, and February 2021.

This brief presents an analysis of the survey results and their implications for policy and campus practice. In general, we focus on data from the February 2021 survey,¹ though longitudinal data are included for some survey items. We also reference additional research conducted by ACE and other organizations that further illuminates key conclusions.

Overall, the data suggest a complex, evolving, and nuanced public view of international students and their intellectual and economic contributions, recognition of a long-term positive impact on U.S. innovation, and a need to revisit current policy narratives and institutional practice.

EXPECTATIONS FOR INCLUSION AND SUCCESS

The American public has high expectations for international student success. They recognize international students' academic, cultural, scientific, and economic contributions as vital members of their communities—on campus, locally, nationally, and globally—both while students are enrolled and when they graduate and enter the workforce. While on the whole, positive sentiment toward international students is greater than the negative opinions, respondents expressed some concern about perceived risks to national security.

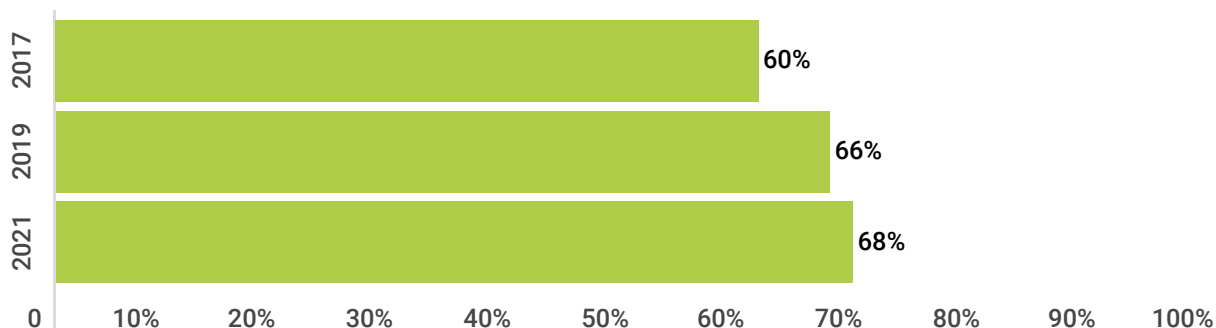
1 Full survey data are included in the Appendix.

Contributions eclipse perceived competition.

The most widely recognized contribution of international students is their positive impact on domestic peers. Overall, a clear majority of those surveyed believe international students make significant intellectual and diplomatic contributions.

- About two-thirds (68 percent) of respondents agree that “American college students benefit when they have close and regular contact with students from other countries.” The proportion of respondents indicating agreement with this statement increased by eight percentage points since the 2017 survey.
- Looking at the broader learning environment for *all* students, 58 percent of respondents indicated they believe that “international students are valuable additions to campuses because they bring intellectual talent and energy to campuses.”
- On the diplomatic front, 64 percent of respondents agree that “encouraging students from other countries to come to the U.S. to attend college or university promotes international goodwill.”
- Respondents also see national- and global-level contributions by international students when it comes to science and research. Fifty-nine percent believe that “international students and graduates play an important role in generating research and knowledge in this country, such as in the development of new vaccines and cures for diseases like the coronavirus.”

Figure 1: Percentage of respondents who agree American college students benefit when they have close and regular contact with students from other countries.



Economic value rationales that have figured prominently in advocacy and campus practice also resonate with the public.

- A majority of respondents recognize the direct contribution of money spent by international students while enrolled. Fifty-six percent indicated they believe that “international students contribute significantly to the US economy when they study here. For example, in 2019, they spent \$44 billion.”
- A slightly larger proportion (60 percent) recognize the indirect, ripple-effect economic boost that may result from direct spending, responding affirmatively that “international students are valuable contributors to the U.S. economy because they spend money when they study here and support jobs in a variety of industries.”

- Respondents are less convinced of the value to domestic students from the financial contributions international students make to their host institutions. Forty percent indicated they believe that “international students pay full tuition, meaning colleges and universities can offer more grants and scholarships to American students.” Thirty-one percent and 29 percent indicated they “do not believe” and “do not know,” respectively.

The belief that students from abroad “take seats” from U.S. students persists; however, there is growing confidence in international students’ academic qualifications and preparedness—including in comparison to their U.S. peers.

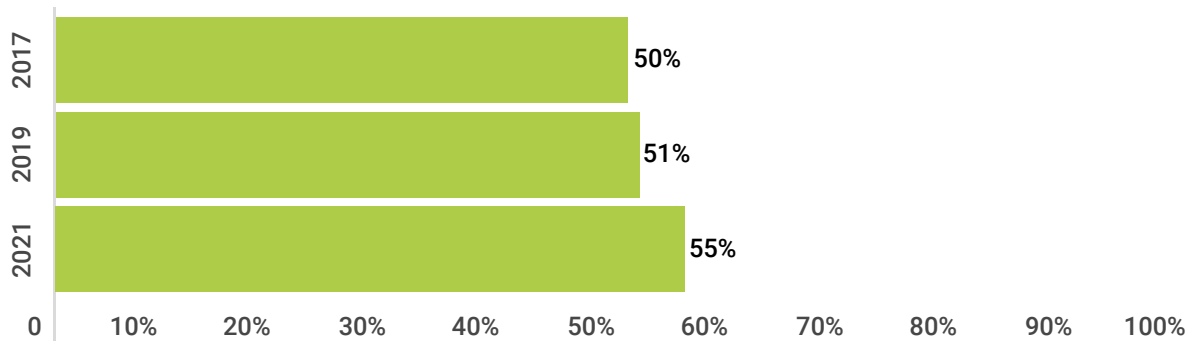
- While not a majority, a sizeable percentage (43 percent) of respondents believe that “students from other countries take places in U.S. colleges and universities that would have gone to students in the U.S.”
- However, half of respondents indicated they believe “most international students earned their seats in U.S. colleges and universities.” An even greater proportion (57 percent) believe that “most international students are better prepared for college than American students.” The percentage of respondents holding each of these beliefs increased between 2019 and 2021.
- When presented with data indicating that international students earn a substantial share of STEM doctorates awarded by U.S. institutions, the largest proportion of respondents believe that U.S. students should have more opportunities to pursue such degrees (versus those who believe that more international students should be encouraged to enroll, or that the current balance of U.S. and international students is acceptable). However, nearly half (48 percent) believe that encouraging more Americans to pursue advanced degrees in STEM fields is not a short-term solution, because many American students currently lack the foundation to be able to go into these fields at that level.

Outcomes outweigh numbers.

Conceptually, there is prevailing sentiment that international students should be “encouraged” to study in the United States, particularly in light of specific outcomes and competition with other countries.

- Over half (55 percent) of respondents agree that “the U.S. should encourage more students from other countries to study in the U.S. in order to strengthen the U.S. economy and contribute to our international competitiveness.” This proportion has increased slightly from 50 percent in 2017 and 51 percent in 2019.
- A similar proportion (53 percent) responded “favor” when asked, “If international students were required to have a negative COVID-19 test before coming to the U.S. to study, would you favor or oppose encouraging more international students to study on American campuses when they are reopened to students?”
- When framed in a competitive context, a majority (55 percent) of respondents agree that “it is in America’s interest to be the top destination of university students from other countries.”

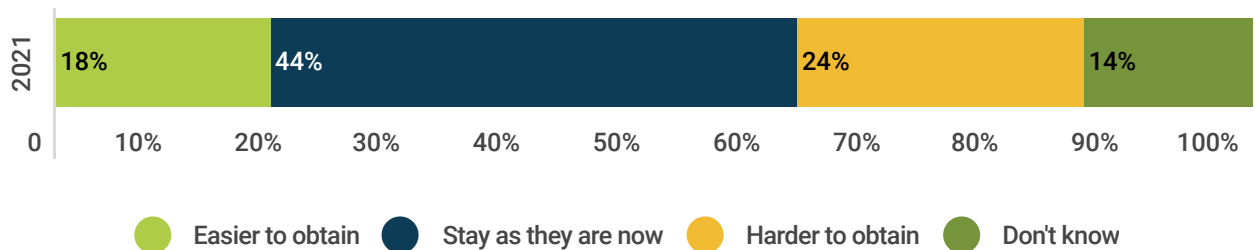
Figure 2: Percentage of respondents who agree the U.S. should encourage more students from other countries to study in the U.S. in order to strengthen the U.S. economy and contribute to our international competitiveness



However, there is a lack of support for a concerted effort to grow the number of international students in the United States.

- Nearly half of respondents (49 percent) agree that “the U.S. should *not* go out of its way to increase the number of international students who enroll at U.S. institutions.”
- When asked in the affirmative and presented with data indicating “since the start of the coronavirus pandemic, the U.S. has seen a 43 percent drop in the number of new international students enrolling in US institutions,” just one-third (33 percent) of respondents agree that “the U.S. should go out of its way to increase the number of international students who enroll at U.S. institutions.”
- Under one-fifth (18 percent) of respondents would want to “see U.S. immigration visas for international students to study in the U.S. made easier to obtain.” The prevailing response (44 percent of respondents) to this question was that visas should “stay as they are now.”

Figure 3: Would you want to see U.S. immigration visas for international students to study in the U.S. made easier to obtain, stay as they are now, or harder to obtain?



Anticipated impact amplifies after graduation.

There is support for international students remaining in the U.S. upon completing their studies. Policy changes to facilitate international students' transition to the U.S. workforce are more compelling than measures to increase their numbers on campus.

- Sixty-one percent of respondents agree that “international students should be given the opportunity, going through the proper legal channels to stay in the U.S. to work and live after graduation.”
- In contrast to the lack of interest in visa policy changes to bring more international students to this country to study, a majority (52 percent) of respondents favor “a proposal to make it easier for international students from U.S. universities with advanced STEM degrees to stay in the United States.”

Short- and long-term scientific, intellectual, and economic contributions are recognized and anticipated as a result of international students' participation in the U.S. workforce.

- A majority (55 percent) agree that international students remaining in the U.S. after they have earned their degrees “would be positive because they enhance our workforce by filling critical jobs in tech and STEM and boost our economy.”
- Scientific contributions particularly resonate in relation to COVID-19. Sixty percent of respondents believe that, “given the challenges that emerged with COVID, it is now more important than ever for the US to have a more knowledgeable and highly skilled workforce, and international students can help fill this need.”
- Respondents also see long-term value when international students pursue academic careers. Sixty-one percent believe that “international students who become professors and stay in the U.S. to teach are valuable parts of institutions' faculties, because they will in turn teach the next generation of U.S. students.”
- Half of respondents think that “if international students generally choose to stay in the U.S. after graduation, this would help increase our economic growth,” rather than that this would decrease or have no impact on economic growth.

Positive post-graduation contributions and impact are also expected when students leave the United States after completing their degrees.

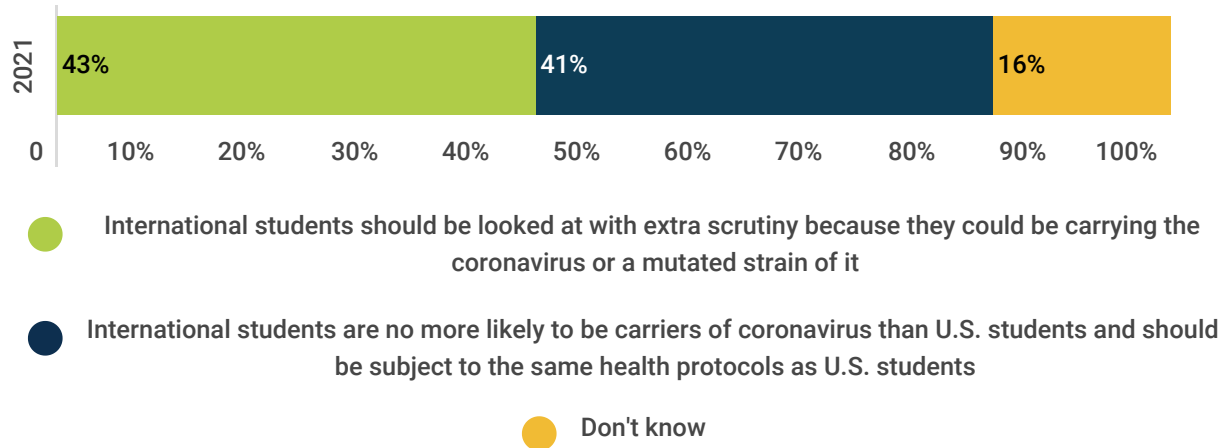
- Fifty-four percent of respondents believe that “because international students will be future leaders in their home countries, having them study at American campuses helps establish a good relationship between the countries.”
- In terms of the global scientific enterprise, 59 percent believe that “international students go on to fill important positions in STEM and tech fields.”

Security and safety concerns reflect broader global context.

Overall impressions of the favorability of international students have not diminished in the wake of COVID-19; however, there is interest in ensuring that incoming international students—and all travelers from abroad—do not spread the virus.

- In both 2019 and 2021, just under 60 percent of respondents indicated a “favorable” (strongly or somewhat) favorable impression of international students.
- A strong majority (82 percent) of respondents favor U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) policy requiring *all* international travelers coming to the U.S. to have a negative COVID-19 test before flying.
- Respondents were split, however, as to whether international students should receive extra scrutiny due to the pandemic. Forty-three percent indicated a view that “international students should be looked at with extra scrutiny because they could be carrying the coronavirus or a mutated strain of it.” However, an almost equal proportion (41 percent) responded that “international students are no more likely to be carriers of coronavirus than U.S. students and should be subject to the same health protocols as U.S. students.”

Figure 4: Which of the following comes closer to your view?



Though a minority view, there is some level of concern that international students are improperly vetted or do not adhere to visa regulations.

- About a third of respondents believe that “international students are not properly vetted before they come to the U.S. to study, and therefore pose a security threat.” This proportion has remained consistent across all three iterations of the survey (2017, 2019, and 2021).
- Just over half of respondents (51 percent) are confident (“very” or “somewhat”) that the State Department does a thorough job of vetting international students. Thirty-eight percent indicated a lack of confidence, while the remaining 11 percent responded “don’t know.”
- Thirty-seven percent of respondents believe that “most international students do not respect their visa timelines and overstay their visas.”

International students may be implicated in wider concerns about security and foreign influence on U.S. colleges and universities.

- A sizable percentage of respondents (between 39 percent and 52 percent) expressed concern on survey items related to institutions' entering into illicit agreements with foreign entities, accepting gifts or funding from foreign governments and other non-U.S. sources, and potentially harmful implications of their doing so.
- When asked about international students in particular, a commensurate proportion (41 percent) of respondents believe that “some international students are sent by their country to try and steal valuable U.S. intellectual property.”
- When China was used as an example of a foreign government, that through illicit or secret agreements with U.S. researchers, seeks to gain valuable research, nearly one in two respondents indicated the belief that this is a widespread problem.
- Overall concerns about foreign influence on U.S. institutions were amplified when respondents were asked about China in particular. Though this survey did not ask about Chinese *students* specifically, data from other sources suggest concern among the public. A March 2021 survey² from the Pew Research Center found that while the U.S. public generally welcomes international students, a majority of Americans (55 percent) support limiting Chinese students studying in the United States.

AN EXPANDED NARRATIVE AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Taken together, the survey data suggest a relatively expansive public view of the value of international students in this country—one that includes appreciation of an array of contributions, and a perceived impact trajectory that extends well beyond the time students spend on campus. Quality and long-term potential matter; there is interest in attracting well-qualified students who will contribute to campus life *and* in creating pathways for graduates to remain in the United States and apply their talents in the U.S. workforce.

Whether used to inform formal advocacy or to “make the case” to a wider audience on campus and in local communities, narratives that focus exclusively on international student numbers and economic impact are inconsistent with public sentiment and expectations. No matter how the question is asked, the public does not see a need to increase international student numbers; quantity simply is not compelling in and of itself. And while tuition dollars and international student spending may be top of mind for institutions in the difficult budgetary environment of recent years, the public is more apt to recognize that international students have a real academic and intellectual impact on U.S. institutions and our broader society.

Five years ago, ACE's 2016 Mapping Internationalization on U.S. Campuses survey data raised concerns about a discrepancy between increasing emphasis on international student recruiting and stagnant levels of support for those students once enrolled. If institutions recruit more students than they are equipped to support and do not attend to students' success while on campus, students' potential to contribute in the multifaceted ways the public expects may be limited. In the long run, an overemphasis on immediate quantitative measures actually has the potential to damage public support if it leads to greater student numbers but unmet expectations for their success.

2 Silver, Laura, Kat Devlin, and Christine Huang. 2021. “Most Americans Support Tough Stance Toward China on Human Rights, Economic Issues.” Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2021/03/04/most-americans-support-tough-stance-toward-china-on-human-rights-economic-issues/>.

The time is right for an expanded narrative about international students in the United States. The COVID-19 pandemic has powerfully underscored just how interconnected the world is—and both the negative (disease spread) and positive (rapid vaccine development) aspects of this interconnectedness. Global problems will require global solutions, and all signs point to an understanding that international students can play important roles—direct and indirect—in advancing the public good. Failing to incorporate these broader contributions into the narratives surrounding international students sells everyone short—international students, colleges and universities, and the public.

In concrete policy terms, there are actions that U.S. policymakers can take to strengthen and restore international student enrollment to pre-pandemic levels, and to facilitate institutions' ability to enroll the number of students they can effectively support. This is especially important given the economic and education benefits of international students to our institutions, and indeed the entire nation. In addition, our nation can only maintain its global scientific and economic leadership position if it encourages those talented people to come here to study and work.

This includes delivering a clear and public welcome message to international students considering enrollment in U.S. institutions of higher education, as well as adopting a national, whole of government strategy to strengthen and increase international student enrollment and support institutions' in ensuring student success.

We are confident that it is possible to create policies that secure this country from those who wish to harm it, while also welcoming those who seek to study, conduct research and scholarship, and contribute their knowledge and talents to our nation's higher education institutions, economy, and overall security.

Given the concerns with the upcoming fall 2021 semester, we are also asking the State Department and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to take specific actions, which will send an initial welcoming message to international students. This includes:

- Ensure the prioritization and efficient processing of student visas and work authorizations by State and DHS, in order to address the previous slowdowns and backlogs.
- Allow for flexibilities regarding required in-person interviews for first time F, J, and M visa applicants, including allowing for virtual interviews or waiving the interview process.
- Update ICE guidance for international students to allow new students to enter the U.S. even if programs of study must pivot to online only because of COVID-19.
- When possible, allow for exemptions for students traveling from countries with COVID-19 travel restrictions.

In the longer term, we urge the Biden administration to work with Congress to pass comprehensive immigration legislation that encourages international students to study in the United States and allows those who wish to remain here after they complete their studies.

- We support legislative proposals that eliminate nonimmigrant intent for international students (F-visa holders), or alternatively, extend dual intent to F-visa holders, which will help the U.S. to retain the best and brightest international students. Additionally, we call on the State Department to use executive action to restore the 2005 "Rice cable," which allows consular officers to use flexibility in interpreting an international student's intent when adjudicating student visa applications.
- We also believe it is important to inspire, teach, and train the next generation of domestic and international students who through innovation will help grow the American economy. Therefore, we

support legislative proposals that would allow international students to remain in the United States following the completion of their studies, especially those with science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) degrees. STEM graduates are innovators, job creators, and critical to the nation's research enterprise.

- We also support efforts to at a minimum streamline the green card process for those who graduate with an advanced degree (not just doctoral degrees) from a U.S. higher education institution so our nation can reap the benefit of having educated these future leaders.

REFINING CAMPUS PRACTICE

While favorable government policies critically underpin international students' trajectories—particularly at key transition points such as their arrival in the United States and their entry into the workforce—ultimate responsibility for international student inclusion and success rests largely with the institutions that welcome them to campus. ACE's 2021 report *Toward Greater Inclusion and Success: A New Compact for International Students* presents a student-centered, lifecycle approach to meeting this responsibility, including concrete strategies institutions can employ. The need for such an approach is underscored by the findings from the current survey. Recommendations for practice include:

- **Incorporate international student recruiting into comprehensive, data-informed enrollment management strategies.** Ensure the international students who come to campus are academically qualified and will be well served based on institutional mission and capabilities. Think carefully and analytically about setting target recruiting numbers or percentages, and avoid establishing arbitrary or revenue-centered goals.
- **Prioritize real inclusion.** Understand that simply having international students on campus does not automatically lead to their becoming active members of the campus community, or to meaningful interaction and mutual learning between international students and their domestic peers. Dedicate resources and expertise to creating academic, co-curricular, and social opportunities for sustained, substantive cross-cultural learning. Promote partnerships and collaborative working relationships among leaders and staff in international programs; diversity, equity, and inclusion; student affairs; and other units.
- **Recognize that while international students need support in all of the same areas as their domestic peers, their needs may be different, and require specialized expertise among faculty and staff.** Offer professional development opportunities for administrators in areas such as student affairs, career services, residence life, and for faculty, to build competency in creating inclusive classroom environments. Leverage teaching and learning centers and external professional organizations.
- **Remain vigilant to the impact of current events and the broader local, national, and global context on messages international students may be receiving about their presence—on campus and beyond.** Facilitate open and frequent communication with international students and build trusting relationships that allow for early detection of emotional stress or mental health issues. Provide clear guidance on where students should report incidents of racism and discrimination, and how such situations will be addressed. Ensure that counseling professionals are equipped to provide culturally sensitive services for international students.

- **Provide multifaceted career counseling and advising that allows international students to explore multiple career pathways, and positions them for success whether they remain in the United States, or enter the workforce in another country.** Articulate the advantages of hiring international students to local businesses and organizations, and help employers understand and navigate Curricular Practical Training (CPT) and Optional Practical Training (OPT) processes in order to offer internships.
- **Ensure compliance with visa processes and other regulations.** While responsibility for vetting international students based on security rests with the State Department, dedicating time and personnel to compliance—and to supporting students in this realm—is critical.
- **Practice transparency and thorough, ethical management in all relationships and transactions with entities outside the U.S.** Recognize that negative perceptions of institutional global engagement activities in any realm (research, contracting, etc.) may impact attitudes and behaviors toward international students.
- **Engage the local community in activities and learning opportunities with international students.** Establish host family programs and create opportunities for international students to visit local schools, join community organizations, take part in local events, and share their talents and successes. Reinforce the public’s impression that international students make meaningful, multifaceted, and sustained contributions to their campuses and communities.
- **Maintain relationships with international alumni—wherever they land post-graduation.** Tap their expertise to support current students, and provide advice on career pathways. Track their success and share their stories.
- **Contribute to advocacy efforts.** Encourage collaboration between international programs offices and government affairs units to identify critical state and national policies that impact international students. Provide on-the-ground evidence of policy impact—positive and negative—to inform and bolster advocacy efforts.

ACE RESOURCES

Policy and Advocacy

- Key Immigration Priorities for the Higher Education Community, March 2021
- March 18, 2021 higher education letter to Department of State and Department of Homeland Security regarding fall 2021 semester
- February 3, 2021 higher education letter to Department of Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas on his confirmation
- January 27, 2021 higher education letter to Secretary of State Antony Blinken on his confirmation

Research and Programs

- *Toward Greater Inclusion and Success: A New Compact for International Students*
- *Internationalizing the Co-Curriculum: Integrating International Students*
- *International Higher Education Partnerships: A Global Review of Standards and Practices*
- *Mapping Internationalization on U.S. Campuses*
- ACE Internationalization Laboratory

APPENDIX



ACE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS NATIONAL SURVEY 1000 Registered Voters February 13-17, 2021

1. Generally speaking, would you say higher education in this country is headed in the right direction, or are things seriously headed off on the wrong track?

	DEC 2019	FEB 2021
1. Right Direction	39	35
2. Don't Know	18	20
3. Wrong Track	43	45

For each of the following, do you have a strongly favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or strongly unfavorable impression? (ROTATE 2-4)

		NAME ID	TOTAL FAV	TOTAL UNFAV	NO OPINION
2. Colleges and universities	DEC 2019	99	66	24	9
	FEB 2021	99	61	28	10
3. Higher education	DEC 2019	99	74	18	8
	FEB 2021	99	68	24	8
4. International students	DEC 2019	99	57	19	23
	FEB 2021	99	56	20	23

5. How would you rate the effects of having students from other countries study in the US? Use a 1-9 scale, where 1 is detrimental, 5 is neutral, and 9 is beneficial.

MAR 2017: 6.21

DEC 2019: 6.29

FEB 2021: 6.02

Would you agree or disagree with the following statements: (ROTATE 6-7)

6. It is in America's interest to be the top destination of university students from other countries.

	MAR 2017	DEC 2019	FEB 2021
1. Agree	56	61	55
2. Disagree	23	17	24
3. Don't know	21	23	21

7. The United States should not go out of its way to increase the number of international students who enroll at US institutions.

1. Agree	49
2. Disagree	34
3. Don't know	18

BELIEFS ABOUT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Do you believe or not believe the following statements? (ROTATE 8-17)

8. Students from other countries take places in US colleges and universities that would have gone to students from the US.

	MAR 2017	DEC 2019	FEB 2021
1. Believe	37	42	43
2. Do not believe	42	34	36
3. Don't know	21	24	22

9. International students are not properly vetted before they come to the US to study, and therefore pose a security risk.

	DEC 2019	FEB 2021
1. Believe	36	37
2. Do not believe	35	35
3. Don't know	30	28

10. Some international students are sent by their country to try and steal valuable US intellectual property.

	DEC 2019	FEB 2021
1. Believe	39	41
2. Do not believe	32	34
3. Don't know	29	25

11. Most international students do not respect their visa timelines and overstay their visas.

	DEC 2019	FEB 2021
1. Believe	36	37
2. Do not believe	33	38
3. Don't know	30	26

12. International students pay full tuition, meaning colleges and universities can offer more grants and scholarships to American students.

	DEC 2019	FEB 2021
1. Believe	38	40
2. Do not believe	30	31
3. Don't know	31	29

13. International students are valuable additions to campuses because they bring intellectual talent and energy to campuses.

	DEC 2019	FEB 2021
1. Believe	55	58
2. Do not believe	22	21
3. Don't know	23	21

14. International students go on to fill important positions in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) and tech fields.

	DEC 2019	FEB 2021
1. Believe		59
2. Do not believe		18
3. Don't know		23

15. Because international students will be the future leaders in their home countries, having them study at American campuses helps establish a good relationship between the countries.

	DEC 2019	FEB 2021
1. Believe	52	54
2. Do not believe	22	23
3. Don't know	25	22

16. International students are valuable contributors to the US economy because they spend money when they study here and support jobs in a variety of industries.

1. Believe	60
2. Do not believe	22
3. Don't know	18

17. International students contribute significantly to the US economy when they study here. For example, in 2019, they spent \$44 billion.

1. Believe	56
2. Do not believe	21
3. Don't know	22

18. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: American college students benefit when they have close and regular contact with students from other countries.

	MAR 2017	DEC 2019	FEB 2021
1. Agree	60	66	68
2. Disagree	18	15	16
3. Don't know	21	19	16

19. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The US should encourage more students from other countries to study in the US in order to strengthen the US economy and contribute to our international competitiveness.

	MAR 2017	DEC 2019	FEB 2021
1. Agree	50	51	55
2. Disagree	29	25	25
3. Don't know	21	24	21

20. Does encouraging students from other countries to come to the US to attend college or university promote international goodwill?

	MAR 2017	DEC 2019	FEB 2021
1. Yes	60	67	64
2. No	24	16	18
3. Don't know	16	17	17

COLLEGE READINESS/TAKING SEATS AWAY

Do you believe or not believe the following statements? (ROTATE 21-23)

21. Most high school graduates in the US today are ready for college.

	DEC 2019	FEB 2021
1. Believe	29	31
2. Do not believe	55	54
3. Don't know	15	15

22. Most international students are better prepared for college than American students.

	DEC 2019	FEB 2021
1. Believe	53	57
2. Do not believe	21	20
3. Don't know	27	23

23. International students have more time and opportunity to pursue advanced degrees because their studies are funded by either their families or their government.

	DEC 2019	FEB 2021
1. Believe	53	53
2. Do not believe	17	17
3. Don't know	30	30

24. Which of the following comes closer to your view? (ROTATE)

	DEC 2019	FEB 2021
1. International students take seats in US colleges and universities away from American students.	31	30
2. International students earned their seats in US colleges and universities.	45	50
3. Don't know	24	21

NATIONAL SECURITY/TIES TO FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS QUESTIONS

25. Which of the following comes closer to your view? (ROTATE)

	MAR 2017	DEC 2019	FEB 2021
1. Students from other countries who come to study in the US are not sufficiently vetted and therefore pose a security threat.	34	35	34
2. Students from other countries who come to study in the US are sufficiently vetted and pose no security threat.	42	39	39
3. Don't know	24	26	26

26. The State Department has the responsibility to vet all students from foreign countries who wish to study in the US. How confident are you that the State Department does a thorough job of vetting these students? (ROTATE 1-4, 4-1)

1. Very confident	21
2. Somewhat confident	30
3. Somewhat not confident	21
4. Not confident at all	17
5. Don't know	11
TOTAL CONFIDENT	51
TOTAL NOT CONFIDENT	38

Do you believe or not believe the following statements: (ROTATE 27-29)

27. Foreign governments offering to pay scientists in US universities, government, and the private sector to provide them with valuable research, through illicit or secret agreements, is a widespread problem.

1. Believe	39
2. Do not believe	26
3. Don't know	35

28. Some colleges and universities in the US receive large amounts of money from foreign sources, like governments or other legal entities, either as gifts or as a result of contracts with those sources.

1. Believe	52
2. Do not believe	16
3. Don't know	32

29. Colleges and universities in the US consistently underreport or fail to disclose funds they receive from foreign sources, either as gifts or from contracts with those foreign sources.

1. Believe	43
2. Do not believe	23
3. Don't know	34

30. Is it acceptable or unacceptable for colleges and universities to accept funds from foreign sources?

1. Acceptable	44
2. Unacceptable	31
3. Don't know	25

31. Do you believe or not believe the following statement: Colleges and universities' receiving funds from foreign entities causes them to engage in behaviors they would not otherwise engage in that are harmful to the US.

1. Believe	44
2. Do not believe	29
3. Don't know	27

CORONAVIRUS

32. Do you think the situation with the coronavirus is... (ROTATE TOP TO BOTTOM, BOTTOM TO TOP)

1. Starting to improve	35
2. Staying about the same	29
3. Getting worse	20
4. Too soon to tell	12
5. Don't know	5

33. Since the start of the coronavirus pandemic, the US has seen a 43% drop in the number of new international students enrolling in US institutions. Given this statistic, do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The United States should go out of its way to increase the number of international students who enroll at US institutions.

1. Agree	33
2. Disagree	47
3. Don't know	20

34. Which of the following comes closer to your view? (ROTATE)

1. International students should be looked at with extra scrutiny because they could be carrying the coronavirus or a mutated strain of it.	43
2. International students are no more likely to be carriers of coronavirus than US students and should be subject to the same health protocols as US students.	41
3. Don't know	16

35. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently announced that the US will require all international travelers coming to the US to have a negative Covid-19 test before flying. Do you favor or oppose this policy?

1. Favor	82
2. Oppose	9
3. Don't know	9

36. If international students were required to have a negative Covid-19 test before coming to the US to study, would you favor or oppose encouraging more international students to study on American campuses when they are reopened to students?

1. Favor	53
2. Oppose	24
3. Don't know	23

BALANCE OF US/INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN DOCTORAL AND STEM PROGRAMS

37. International students earn about one-quarter of US doctorates across all fields and one-third of those awarded in science and engineering, including high-demand fields such as computer science. Which of the following is closer to your view? (ROTATE 1 and 3)

	DEC 2019	FEB 2021
1. We should encourage more international students to pursue doctorates in the US.	11	11
2. The current balance of US and international students earning doctorates in the US is acceptable.	29	28
3. We should provide US students more opportunities to pursue doctoral studies, especially in high demand fields like computer science.	45	46
4. Don't know	15	14

Do you believe or not believe the following statements: (ROTATE 38-40)

38. The US is working to encourage American students to pursue advanced degrees in STEM fields.

1. Believe	53
2. Do not believe	21
3. Don't know	25

39. Encouraging more Americans to pursue advanced degrees in STEM fields does not have a short-term solution, because many American students currently lack the foundation to be able to go into those fields at that level.

1. Believe	48
2. Do not believe	26
3. Don't know	26

40. In the absence of a highly skilled, deep talent pool of American workers to fill certain technology jobs, we need to continue to be welcoming of international students and graduates.

1. Believe	47
2. Do not believe	27
3. Don't know	26

41. Would you favor or oppose a proposal to make it easier for international students graduating from US universities with advanced STEM degrees to stay in the United States?

1. Favor	52
2. Oppose	23
3. Don't know	25

AFTER GRADUATION/ QUANTIFYING LOSSES IF THEY GO BACK

42. Do you believe or not believe the following statement: The majority of students from other countries return to their home country after completing their studies in the U.S.

	MAR 2017	DEC 2019	FEB 2021
1. Believe	40	49	46
2. Do not believe	29	29	29
3. Don't know	31	21	24

43. Which of the following comes closer to your view? (ROTATE)

	DEC 2020	FEB 2021
1. International students should be required to return to their home countries after completing their studies in the US.	26	24
2. International students should be given the opportunity, going through the proper legal channels, to stay in the US to work and live after graduation.	60	61
3. Don't know	14	14

44. Which of the following comes closer to your view about international students remaining in the United States after they have earned their degrees? (ROTATE)

1. This would be positive because they enhance our workforce by filling critical jobs in tech and STEM and boost our economy.	55
2. This would negative because they would take jobs away from Americans.	26
3. Don't know	20

45. If international students generally choose to stay in the US after graduation, do you think this would help increase, decrease, or have no impact on our economic growth? (ROTATE 1-2)

1. Increase	50
2. Decrease	11
3. This would have no impact	20
4. Don't know	18

46. If international students generally choose to stay in the US after graduation, do you think this would increase, decrease, or have no impact on the knowledge generated in the US (such as scientific and medical innovation)? (ROTATE 1-2)

1. Increase	53
2. Decrease	11
3. This would have no impact	18
4. Don't know	18

Do you believe or not believe the following statements: (ROTATE 47-50)

47. International students will play an important role in the economic recovery of the US after Covid.

1. Believe	45
2. Do not believe	27
3. Don't know	28

48. International students and graduates play an important role in generating research and knowledge in this country, such as in the development of new vaccines and cures for diseases like the coronavirus.

1. Believe	59
2. Do not believe	17
3. Don't know	24

49. International students who become professors and stay in the US to teach are valuable parts of institutions' faculties, because they will in turn teach the next generation of US students.

1. Believe	61
2. Do not believe	20
3. Don't know	19

50. Given the challenges that have emerged with Covid, it is now more important than ever for the US to have a more knowledgeable and highly-skilled workforce, and international students can help fill this need.

1. Believe	60
2. Do not believe	20
3. Don't know	20

51. Which of the following comes closest to your view about international students staying in the US after they graduate? (ROTATE 1 and 3)

1. It would be in the best interest of the United States to have as many international students who studied in the US stay after they graduate as possible.	35
2. Whether international students stay or go home after they graduate has little to no bearing on US interests.	32
3. International students staying in the United States after they graduate would harm US interests.	15
4. Don't know	18

52. International students earn about one-quarter of US doctorates across all fields and one-third of those awarded in science and engineering, fields with important ties to the development of vaccines and cures for diseases like the coronavirus. Which of the following is closer to your view? (ROTATE 1 and 3)

1. We should encourage more international students to pursue doctorates in the US.	17
2. The current balance of US and international students earning doctorates in the US is acceptable.	28
3. We should provide US students more opportunities to pursue doctoral studies, especially in fields like science and engineering.	41
4. Don't know	14

53. Would you want to see U.S. immigration visas for international students to study in the US made easier to obtain, stay as they are now, or harder to obtain? (ROTATE 1 and 3)

	DEC 2019	FEB 2021
1. Easier to obtain	16	18
2. Stay as they are now	42	44
3. Harder to obtain	28	24
4. Don't know	14	14

54. Now having answered all these questions, how would you rate the effects of having students from other countries study in the US? Use a 1-9 scale, where 1 is detrimental, 5 is neutral, and 9 is beneficial.

MEAN: 6.10

(ROTATE 55-56)

55. Which of the following would be the most important reason to be skeptical of allowing international students to study at US. institutions? (ROTATE 1-6)

1. They engage in the intellectual theft of American research for the benefit of their home countries	11
2. They take seats away from American students	12
3. They tend to overstay their visas	7
4. They do not study as hard as American students	2
5. They are not sufficiently vetted and pose a threat to American security	13
6. They go back to their home countries with the skill sets they have acquired and use their skills to be more competitive with other countries, including the United States	20
7. Something else (SPECIFY)	*

8. No good reason to be skeptical	21
9. Don't know	13

56. Which of the following would be the most important reason to want to encourage more international students to study at US institutions? (ROTATE 1-6)

1. They spend more money here than American students and boost the American economy	8
2. They enhance the higher education experience of America's students	11
3. They go on to fill important jobs in tech and STEM fields	16
4. They take home positive views about Americans	9
5. They pay full tuition, meaning institutions can offer scholarships and other opportunities to more students	17
6. Some international students go on to become professors at US institutions, teaching the next generation of US students	13
7. Something else (SPECIFY)	*
8. No good reason to encourage	15
9. Don't know	11

Now just a few demographic questions for statistical purposes only—

57. In what year were you born?

1. 18-34	17
2. 35-44	19
3. 45-54	20
4. 55-64	21
5. 65+	23

58. Generally speaking, do you consider yourself (ROTATE) a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or something else?

1. Republican	35
2. Democrat	37
3. Independent	24
4. Other	2
5. Don't Know	2

59. If you had to classify yourself, would you say you are very liberal, somewhat liberal, moderate, somewhat conservative or very conservative in your political beliefs?

1. Very Liberal	9
2. Somewhat Liberal	14
3. Moderate	38
4. Somewhat Conservative	17
5. Very Conservative	19
6. Don't Know	3

60. Are there children in your household under the age of 18 years old?

1. Yes	28
2. No	70
3. Don't Know	1

61. What is your current marital status?

1. Single, never married	31
2. Married	50
3. Separated	2
4. Divorced	12
5. Widowed	5
6. Don't Know	*

62. What is the annual income of your household before taxes? Is it...

1. Less than 15K	10
2. 15K-30K	17
3. 30K-50K	18
4. 50K-75K	20
5. 75K-100K	11
6. 100-200K	17
7. Over 200K	3
8. Don't Know	4

63. What is your religion?

1. Evangelical Protestant	17
2. Mainline Protestant	12
3. Catholic	27
4. Jewish	5
5. Mormon	1
6. Atheist/Agnostic	12
7. Other	22
8. Don't Know	5

64. What is your race?

1. Hispanic	13
2. African-American	12
3. Asian	3
4. White	69
5. Other	2
6. Don't Know	1

65. Do you or anyone in your household belong to a labor union?

1. Yes	14
2. No	85
3. Don't know	2

66. What was the last grade of school that you completed?

1. Did not complete high school	2
2. High school graduate	20
3. Attended college but received no degree	24
4. Associates degree	13
5. College graduate – Bachelors	25
6. Postgraduate study or degree	16

**67. (AMONG THOSE ANSWERING BACHELORS OR POSTGRADUATE STUDY/DEGREE)
Did you study abroad when you were a student?**

	DEC 2019	FEB 2021
1. Yes	20	15
2. No	78	84
3. Don't know	2	*

RESUME WITH ALL

68. Have you ever interacted with an international student?

	DEC 2019	FEB 2021
1. Yes	53	51
2. No	42	45
3. Don't know	5	3

69. What is your employment status?

1. Employed, full time	39
2. Employed, part-time	8
3. Unemployed	11
4. Self-employed	5
5. Homemaker	8
6. Student	2
7. Retired	27
8. Don't Know	*

70. In the 2020 presidential election, for which presidential candidate did you vote? (ROTATE 1-2, THEN 3)

1. Donald Trump, the Republican candidate	41
2. Joe Biden, Democratic candidate	50
3. Third party candidate/Other	3
4. Did not vote	5
5. Don't Know	1

71. What type of area do you live in?

1. Urban	30
2. Suburban	48
3. Rural	21

72. Foreign governments, like that of China, offering to pay scientists in US universities, government, and the private sector to provide them with valuable research, through illicit or secret agreements, is a widespread problem.

1. Believe	49
2. Do not believe	20
3. Don't know	31

Gender

1. Male	48
2. Female	52

Region

1. Northeast	17
2. South	35
3. Midwest	19
4. Plains/Mountains	19
5. West Coast	10