



June 3, 2020

The Honorable Ron Johnson
328 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Johnson:

I want to let you know about my concerns regarding the administration's proposed non-immigrant visa restrictions. These restrictions will stop many of our international students from coming to the University of Wisconsin–Madison, resulting in serious negative impacts on the university and on the innovation that drives economic growth. International graduate students support undergraduate classroom and laboratory instruction, and contribute to scientific discoveries and inventions that benefit our country's health and well-being.

The administration's May 29 order targeting Chinese graduate students and researchers with any tie to an institution that is linked to the Chinese military is written so vaguely that it could be used to deny visas to Chinese students who have no connection to defense-related research.

In addition, the proposal to suspend or restrict Optional Practical Training (OPT), which offers international students an opportunity to stay after they graduate and engage in time-limited experiential learning while contributing to the economy, would be damaging to international education and economic growth. OPT is a driver of innovation. It does not have a negative impact on employment or wages for U.S. workers. UW–Madison has more than 1,000 international students who have completed their degree training at UW–Madison who then obtain short-term employment across the country to gain work experience in their field using the OPT or STEM-OPT program. If we close our doors, these talented people will be recruited by other countries that have recently expanded post-graduation work rules to help retain international talent and boost their global competitiveness. Opportunities for post-graduation work experience are an important consideration for international students deciding where to study. Restricting OPT would put Wisconsin and the nation at a competitive disadvantage at a time when we need more employees in STEM fields.

Finally, the restrictions on H-1B visas under consideration would be extremely harmful to our teaching and research. UW–Madison has about 260 H-1B scholars whose contributions to our campus cannot readily be replaced. About 35 percent of the H-1B scholars on our campus work in areas related to health. Many also teach our students, providing valuable knowledge and perspectives.

Chancellor Rebecca M. Blank
Morgridge Friends Distinguished Chair of Leadership

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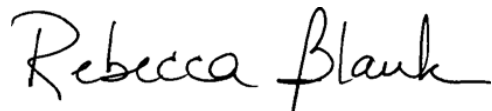
International education and exchange has long been one of our nation's greatest foreign policy assets, contributing to mutual understanding and building life-long relationships that benefit our country over time. At UW–Madison, our 6,500 international students help create connections that sustain more than \$22 billion in Wisconsin exports, and the 20 percent of Wisconsin jobs that depend on trade.

Some in Congress are targeting China for stealing U.S. technology from college campuses. We understand the importance of protecting intellectual property and our campus takes its national security responsibilities seriously. We work with federal intelligence agencies and comply with federal export control laws. International students and researchers are vetted by multiple agencies. The risk of Chinese espionage and IP piracy is real – but unfortunately the president's proposal and the SECURE CAMPUS Act in the Senate would do little to protect our national security and do much more to penalize innocent Chinese students who do important work on our campus and other university campuses across this nation.

For the U.S. to remain a leader in research and innovation, our major research universities must continue to be magnets for the best and brightest minds from around the globe. I respectfully ask that you consider the serious impact restrictions on non-immigrant visas will have on U.S. leadership in science and technology.

Thank you for your consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rebecca Blank". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rebecca M. Blank
Chancellor
University of Wisconsin–Madison