Student Immigration Reform Recruits and Retains the Brightest Minds

The National Association of Foreign Student Advisers (NAFSA) reported that international students contributed $39 billion to the U.S. economy and supported more than 455,000 jobs during the 2017-18 academic year. Immigrants also positively contribute to the nation’s entrepreneurial development. In fact, as of 2010, immigrants or children of immigrants founded 40% of Fortune 500 companies, including South-African born Elon Musk (Tesla, SpaceX), Russian-born Sergey Brin (Google), and French-born Iranian Pierre Omidyar (eBay). Contrary to the belief that international students financially burden institutions, the Institute of International Education (IIE) found that 2 of 3 international students use family money to fund their education. However, the surge in highly-qualified students coming to the U.S. has waned. New international student enrollment dropped by 3.3% in the 2016-17 academic year and further dropped by 6.6% in the 2017-2018 academic year. These drops translate to a direct loss of income that international students provide to academic institutions and to several industries where the demand for highly skilled workers continues to exceed supply from the U.S. workforce.

Immigrants have started more than half (44 of 87) of America’s startup companies valued at $1 billion or more, and totaling to $112.8 billion, with 20,026 employees. Immigrants are integral to the product development in more than 70% of these companies. International students are invaluable to innovation in the U.S.; for every 100 international students who receive a STEM Ph.D. from a U.S. university, the nation gains 63 patent applications. Yet many international students are trained in the U.S. only to return home and develop technology that competes with the U.S. market.

SAGE recommends:

- Exempt all students who obtain advanced degrees in the U.S. from the H1-B visa cap
- Oppose H.R. 1044, Fairness for High-Skilled Immigrants Act of 2019, to continue attracting skilled immigrants of diverse national origins to pursue higher education in the U.S.

Dreamers: Allow Children of Undocumented Immigrants to Spur Our Economy

An estimated 5 million jobs requiring a college degree will go unfilled by the year 2020. This shortage can be partially mitigated by allowing children of undocumented immigrants to work in the U.S. economy. A survey found that nearly half of DACA participants are pursuing an education, with 15% of those individuals involved in an advanced degree program. The opportunities offered to undocumented immigrants under the Dream Act would have direct benefits for America, enabling an estimated contribution of $281 billion to the GDP more than 10 years.

SAGE recommends:

- Support H.R. 6, American Dream and Promise Act of 2019, to allow a path to citizenship for skilled undocumented immigrants who would help grow our economy
1 National Association for Foreign Student Advisors. (2018). *NAFSA International Student Economic Value Tool*. NAFSA.