The Presidents’ Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration developed this template letter for institutions of higher education to use to communicate with their Senate and House delegations about the impact of visa delays and denials on the international student population.

Recent data shows that international students are currently contending with excessively long wait times and adjudication and processing delays, with posts reporting interview wait times of 100 to over 350 days, which imperil students’ ability to secure their visas in time for the start of the academic term. In addition, a recent update to the Interview of a Lifetime report published by the Presidents’ Alliance and Shorelight shows disproportionately high visa denial rates for applicants from the African continent. While students from Southern Africa have a 19 percent visa denial rate, the rest of the continent has an alarming 61 percent student visa denial rate.

This template is intended to support your efforts to communicate the perspective of the higher education sector to your congressional delegation. This letter is intentionally generic; we have marked a few places for customization in [brackets] and highlighted in yellow, but you may wish to incorporate additional details as appropriate.

**Instructions for Submitting a Letter**

- **Format:** Please submit documents in Word or PDF format.
- **Content:** Statements should be pertinent to the topic at hand and free from private personal information.
- **Deadline:** We encourage HEIs to send letters as soon as possible, now that we’ve entered the high-volume visa application season for the next academic term.
- **How to submit:** Your federal relations office will have contact information for the foreign relations staffers of your congressional delegation, and your international student office will likely have information on the number of students admitted to your institution who will need student visas in order to be able to enroll. If you do not have a federal relations office or need further assistance, please contact Jill Welch at jill@presidentsalliance.org.
[Date]

The Honorable [Senator’s full name]
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

RE: DELAYS IN VISA PROCESSING AND ADJUDICATION

Dear Senator [surname]:

On behalf of [Institution], we write to thank you for your work on behalf of the higher education institutions of [State] and to request your support in addressing visa adjudication and processing delays impacting our prospective international student population.

International students bring critical skills, perspectives, and resources to our nation’s colleges and universities. They generate significant economic activity, contributing more than $40 billion in the 2022-2023 academic year. They drive innovation in research and technology, making strides in fields vital to our scientific and national security interests. International students are a vibrant addition to [Institution], helping ensure that we meet our objective of providing a rigorous global education to all our students.

Currently, F-1 student visa applicants face discouragingly long interview wait times and significant adjudication and processing periods. These delays preclude students who have already been admitted to our institutions from making plans for matriculation, disrupting their ability to prepare for their studies and arrive in time for the start of the fall term. Such delays also interfere with our ability to appropriately plan for our incoming class. If students are not able to obtain their visas in time for the start of the term, we risk losing out on a key component of our projected enrollment. Without a reliable sense of who will be joining us on campus, we are unable to project our housing, course enrollment, and student advising needs, among others.

We appreciate that the State Department has attempted to prioritize visa applications for international students and to improve the review and approval process. However, policies and procedures for prioritizing these applicants remain unclear. As a result, international students must contend with a wide range of wait times, with posts reporting interview wait times of 100 to over 350 days. Such delays make it impossible for students to make enrollment decisions, and many decide to change their plans to avoid the resulting uncertainty.

In addition, we would like to draw your attention to emerging disparities in international student visa denial rates. The Presidents’ Alliance reported on consular data showing that students from the African continent face concerningly disproportionate denial rates. Students from Southern Africa have a 19% visa denial rate, but when excluding this subregion, the denial rate for Africa rises to 61%. Africa is home to one-quarter of the world’s adolescents and young adults, and the eligible international student population in this region continues to grow. We urge swift action to investigate current denial rates and provide responsive guidance to consular offices to ensure that these students are provided with the opportunity to pursue their dreams of studying in the United States.

In light of these challenges, we ask that your office work with the State Department to facilitate clear, predictable, and consistent practices regarding international student visa processing. We further ask that you communicate with the State Department to improve transparency regarding F-1 international student visa review and approval policies, particularly for African applicants.

Improving international student visa processing and adjudication will help ensure that the United States retains its reputation for global excellence in higher education. We thank you for
your commitment to our students and campuses and are ready to work with you on this critical topic. 

For any questions or to follow up from this letter, please contact [name] of [institution] at [email] or [phone].

Sincerely,

[institutional signatories]
[Date]

[Representative’s full name]
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: DELAYS IN VISA PROCESSING AND ADJUDICATION

Dear Representative [surname]:

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Currently, F-1 student visa applicants face discouragingly long interview wait times and significant adjudication and processing periods. These delays can preclude students who have already been admitted to our institutions from making plans for matriculation, disrupting their ability to prepare for their studies and arrive in time for the start of the fall term. Such delays also interfere with our ability to appropriately plan for our incoming class. If students are not able to obtain their visas in time for the start of the term, we risk losing out on a key component of our projected enrollment. Without a reliable sense of who will be joining us on campus, we are unable to project our housing, course enrollment, and student advising needs, among others.

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Sincerely,

[institutional signatories]