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July 9, 2020

The Honorable Chad Wolf  
Acting Secretary  
Department of Homeland Security  
245 Murray Lane, SW  
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Acting Secretary Wolf:

On behalf of Boston University (BU), I write to you with significant concerns about the July 6 guidance issued by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) regarding international students and the upcoming 2020-21 academic year. More than 11,000 international students from 134 countries choose to study at BU. These students push the boundaries of scientific and artistic discovery, enriching our society in the process. Given the challenges posed by COVID-19 for the fall 2020 semester, the recently proposed changes to the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) are deeply troubling and misguided.

I urge you to withdraw this guidance and instead extend the flexibility currently afforded to institutions and international students; the guidance previously issued in March recognized the extraordinary circumstances of a global pandemic. Resuming classes this fall will require flexibility in instruction, housing, research, campus life, and all the other facets of a research university as complex as Boston University. The new SEVP guidance will undermine our work to create safe learning experiences, creating confusion and complexity for our students.

Over time, policies like these will discourage international students and scholars from studying and conducting research in the U.S., limit our worldview, and have a chilling effect on our nation's ability to attract top talent. Restricting international students from studying in the United States not only harms our own well-being, it diminishes what America stands for in the world.

I request that ICE allow any international student with a valid visa to continue their education regardless of whether a student is receiving his or her education online, in person, or through a combination of both, during this pandemic. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robert A. Brown". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Robert A. Brown