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Statement for the Record – Joint Hearing Subcommittee on International Organizations,
Human Rights and Oversight and the Subcommittee on Higher Education, Lifelong
Learning and Competitiveness
Rep. Rubén Hinojosa
June 29, 2007

I would like to thank Chairman Delahunt for calling today's joint hearing on "International Students and Visiting Scholars: Trends, Barriers, and Implications for American Universities and U.S. Foreign Policy." International exchange of scholars enriches and strengthens our nation. The Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights and Oversight and the Subcommittee on Higher Education, Lifelong Learning and Competitiveness share an interest and responsibility for expanding opportunities for international education for visiting scholars here and for our students abroad.

Our system of higher education is world renowned. It has been a magnet for the top academic talent from all corners of the globe. International education is a \$15 billion per year industry that has kept the United States on the cutting edge of research and innovation.

However, in the post 9/11 world, we have seen our competitive edge in higher education slip. In the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attacks of 9/11, we had to confront fear and strengthen our national security. Thus, we established the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System. The new system faced many challenges – from a rush to implementation to a major overhaul of the agencies responsible for issuing visas and managing the system. Today, many international scholars are choosing not to put themselves through our visa process and are going to universities in other nations.

We need to regain our lost momentum. The international student market is increasingly competitive. We must ensure that our processes, while safeguarding our national security, do not discourage international students from seeking to study in the United States.

The benefits of the global exchange of ideas on our college campuses are in our national interest – our economic interest and our national security interest. Recent surveys have

shown that there is an urgent need to improve America's image abroad. One of the most potent tools and long-lasting strategies to achieve this goal is to ensure that our institutions of higher learning remain open to the best and brightest from around the world.

In a similar vein, we need to do a better job of expanding our citizens' understanding of the world and other cultures. Our nation needs more people who are comfortable and experienced in an international or global environment. Some of our first federal higher education programs were created with that end in mind. Many of these program are found in Title VI of the Higher Education Act, including: the International and Foreign Language Studies Program that funds centers for area and language studies, The Business and International Education Program that funds centers to promote the Nation's capacity for international understanding and economic enterprise, and the International Institute for Public Policy that is designed to prepare students from minority-serving institutions for careers in foreign affairs.

I would like to thank the witnesses for joining us today. I am interested in your views and recommendations on how we can foster greater internationalization on U.S. campuses by welcoming scholars from around the world to our universities and by encouraging our students to gain experience abroad.

Thank you.